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JOHN KEATS

From a miniature by Joseph Severn in the
National Portrait Gallery

K E A T S

Poetry & Prose

With Essays by

CHARLES LAMB, LEIGH HUNT

ROBERT BRIDGES

& OTHERS

With an Introduction and Notes by

HENRY ELLERSHAW

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O X F O R D

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FOR permission to reprint part of Mr. Robert Bridges' introduction to the edition of Keats in the Muses' Library we are indebted to Messrs. George Routledge & Sons (the version here printed was revised by Mr. Bridges for *The Poetical Works of John Keats*, illustrated by Claude A. Shepperson and published by Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton in 1914). The extract from Swinburne's Essay on Keats is printed with the leave of Mr. William Heinemann.

INTRODUCTION

OF the five great English poets living in the second decade of the nineteenth century, John Keats was the latest born and the first to die. Unlike the rest of them he had no advantage either in birth or education ; but though his opportunities were slight and his allotted span of life short, by force of genius in four brief years he had triumphed over all obstacles, and wrung from the world the acknowledgement of his right to a place among the great poets—not only of his own, but of any country—and had extorted even from Byron the admission that *Hyperion* was ' as sublime as Aeschylus '. Keats's first reviews were unfortunate ; for though Jeffrey in the *Edinburgh* restored the credit of the critic's craft by an article which was a real criticism, and touched at once the weak spots in the poem, *Endymion* was maliciously handled in the *Quarterly* and *Blackwood*. The fact is that besides being blinded by bigotry, the writers of these reviews did not understand that the poem was not only a new handling of an old myth but also an allegory. The poem is not completely successful, although it contains, with certain weaknesses and lapses, passages of extraordinary beauty. That *Endymion* did not satisfy its author we know, but in spite of all imperfections it demands and deserves as close a study as any other part of his poetry.

Hyperion remains a fragment. Keats felt that in leaving it unfinished he was escaping the bondage of Milton, and there is some truth in this, but hardly the whole truth, for we may fairly ask whether Keats was such a slavish imitator of Milton as he supposed he was, and as some of his critics have thought. We know that Keats was a student of

Milton, we may grant verbal resemblance here and there—echoes of Milton's song; but having said so much there is enough left to justify us in claiming for Keats a real originality of diction and thought. We do not find in *Hyperion* the same granite massiveness which meets us in *Paradise Lost*, though for all that the effect is sculptural. No one could say that *Hyperion* was by Milton, though a Miltonic echo might be allowed. Take the opening, it is Keats through and through, both thought and verse. Every poet handles metre in accordance with his genius, and the wonderful lines beginning

As when upon a tranced summer night

have not the ring of Milton: they are original. The theme of *Hyperion* is akin to that of *Endymion*. In the earlier work the poet's search was for absolute beauty; in the later he asserts by the mouth of Oceanus that

'Tis the eternal law
That first in beauty should be first in might.

Thus, as the old gods were driven out by Saturn and his peers, so they in turn must themselves fall before Jupiter, who eventually is to give way to a higher manifestation of beauty. The whole of Keats's poetic creed was the identification of truth with beauty:

Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

This principle of beauty haunted Keats like a passion, and it proclaims its presence in all his work, but especially in the volume of 1820, which, with the exception of *La Belle Dame sans merci* and one or two more poems, contains most of his best things. Among these must be singled out *Isabella*, *The Eve of St. Agnes*, and *Lamia*. They are Keats's three attempts at telling a story in verse. The first two are fulfilled with the spirit of Romance, but in spite of

Lamb's dictum that 'the finest thing in the volume [that of 1820] is the paraphrase of Boccaccio's story of the Pot of Basil', the first place must be given to *The Eve of St. Agnes*. Nowhere else, except in the Odes, do we get in one poem so many and such superb instances of Keats's peculiar genius—his power of suggestion by means of concrete instances. Is it icy cold that we want? How is it better expressed than by

Ah, bitter chill it was!
The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold.

Again,

The sculptur'd dead, on each side, seem to freeze,
Emprison'd in black purgatorial rails:
Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries,
He passeth by; and his weak spirit fails
To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails.

It would not be easy to surpass what follows for the life imported into dead things :

The carved angels, ever eager-eyed,
Star'd, where upon their heads the cornice rests,
With hair blown back, and wings put cross-wise on
their breasts.

All through the poem atmospheric effects are brought before the mind with magical power, for instance :

hid from the torch's flame
Behind a broad hall-pillar,

and again :

Where the faded moon
Made a dim silver twilight.

The most magnificent portion of the poem consists of stanzas xxiv-xxvii. Never has English poet showed more subtle craftsmanship. Never has language been used with finer or richer effect. Keats seems to have arrived at the limits of what it is possible to do with words.

And though the atmosphere may seem heavy and over close, that feeling can be dispelled in a moment :

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,
In blanched linen, smooth and lavender'd.

In *The Eve of St. Agnes* the richness and luxuriance of romance is exhibited in its highest development. Yet almost more wonderful is *La Belle Dame sans merci*, which is a companion though a contrasted picture. In it with absolutely penurious austerity of language the poet shows that he can thrill the reader with visionary figures, and call up before the eye of the mind 'pale kings and princes'.

Turning to the third tale we find that Keats attempted something new in *Lamia*. The story is classic, yet the effect is romantic, and the style of the heroic couplet—so different from that of *Endymion*—is due to a study of Dryden. Probably no one would have been more astonished than Dryden himself to see the new thing which another man's handling of the metre had produced ; for although founded on Dryden there is an individuality which is entirely due to Keats. Compared with *Isabella* and *The Eve of St. Agnes* there is, as has been said, a metallic sheen diffused from *Lamia*. The poem lacks the virginal pathos of *Isabella* and the devout passion of *The Eve* ; but the story is well-knit and informed with a fervour which would not be easy to match ; and its colouring is brilliant though hard when compared with that of some other of the poems. Still *Lamia* is not without blemish : for instance, in Part I, 'ever-smitten' as an epithet of Hermes and the lines 328 to 332. The beginning of Part II cannot by any stretch be styled happy either in sentiment or expression. The picture of Love buzzing his wings 'with fearful roar' is ludicrous. But no one can deny that the poem is full of happy expressions, has more than its share of picturesque

words, and as an example of a story told in verse, possesses a splendour almost unsurpassable.

Besides his poetry Keats has left an almost equal treasure in his letters. From these we get not only a knowledge of his artistic endeavour and tastes, but also a knowledge of the man himself. If the letters be combined with gleanings from other sources, there are few poets whose lives and aims are so well known.

In boyhood he was eager, not particularly bookish, good-humoured and pugnacious, a general favourite because of his chivalrous nature and freedom from all that was mean. His manliness, however, was joined to a very sensitive spirit which was conspicuous both in boyhood and in later days. At school he showed determination in his work and amassed a quantity of general information.

A fellow medical student said of him that he remembered Keats as an idle loafing fellow, always writing poetry ; and a story of the same time is that of Keats telling Cowden Clarke that ' the other day during the lecture there came a sunbeam into the room, and with it a whole troop of creatures floating in the ray ; and I am off with them to Oberon and fairy-land '. From the first he seems to have been conscious of his calling to poetry. In April 1817 he writes to Reynolds, ' I find I cannot exist without Poetry—without eternal Poetry—half the day will not do—the whole of it '. Keats possessed both the pride and humility of genius ; ' I had sooner fail than not be among the greatest,' he said (letter to Hessey, Oct. 1818), and again, ' I think I shall be among the English Poets after my death ' (letter to G. and G. Keats, Oct. 1818). He was not averse from the hard path : speaking of *Endymion* he writes to Haydon (Sept. 28, 1817), ' Rome was not built in a Day—and all the good I expect from my employment this summer is the fruit of Experience which I hope to gather in my next Poem '.

His independence of mind is shown in many passages in the letters. To his friend Bailey he says, ' You see Bailey how independent my writing has been. . . . I refused to visit Shelley that I might have my own unfettered scope ' (Oct. 1817). A proof of the same thing is his criticism of Wordsworth and Byron, and his determination to free himself from the domination of Milton. There was one only to whom Keats would bow the knee—Shakespeare. In his note on *Troilus and Cressida* he says, ' The genius of Shakespeare was an innate universality—wherefore he had the utmost achievement of human intellect prostrate beneath his indolent and kingly gaze. He could do easily man's utmost '. But with independence there was no conceit, no idea that he had yet won his place among the Immortals. That was still in the future. Meanwhile, he recognized clearly his own shortcomings and was determined to overcome them. From the first, he had a fixed belief in the identity of beauty and truth. Writing to Bailey (Nov. 22, 1817), he states this definitely, adding that he places sensation, by which he means intuition, before reasoning when he says ' O for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts '. But as time went on he saw the need both of deliberate reasoning and of philosophy, which for him at first merely meant extensive knowledge, though afterwards it seems that he would have studied philosophy in its technical sense, as when he says to Reynolds (April 27, 1818), ' I . . . shall learn Greek and very likely Italian—and in other ways prepare myself to ask Hazlitt in about a year's time the best metaphysical road I can take '. Beauty was Keats's guide to truth, and he was affected by it in all its forms. In a letter to his brother George (Dec. 31, 1818), he declares, ' I have thought so little that I have not one opinion upon anything except in matters of taste—I never can feel certain of any truth but from a clear perception of its Beauty—and I find myself very young minded even in that perceptive

power—which I hope will increase. A year ago I could not understand in the slightest [redacted] see Raphael's Cartoons —now I begin to read them a little'.

His sensitiveness was extraordinary: in a letter to his brother Tom (July 10, 1818), there is a phrase which reminds us of Wordsworth; he says, 'Ailsa struck me very suddenly—really I was a little alarmed'. Compare this with what Wordsworth says in the *Prelude*:

When, from behind that craggy steep till then
 The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,
 As if with voluntary power instinct,
 Upreared its head. I struck and struck again,
 And growing still in stature the grim shape
 Towered up between me and the stars, and still,
 For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
 And measured motion like a living thing,
 Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned.

The very words Keats uses in the *Ode to Psyche* occur in the same letter to Tom, where he speaks of 'Rocks, all fledged with ash and other beautiful trees'. And in earlier days the same domination by the outer senses is observable. Joseph Severn, the artist, remarked how 'nothing seemed to escape him, the song of a bird and the undernote of response from covert or hedge, the rustle of some animal, the changing of the green and brown lights and furtive shadows, the motions of the wind—just how it took certain tall flowers and plants—and the wayfaring of the clouds: even the features and gestures of passing tramps, the colour of one woman's hair, the smile on one child's face, the furtive animalism below the deceptive humanity in many of the vagrants, even the hats, clothes, shoes, wherever these conveyed the remotest hint as to the real self of the wearer. . . . Certain things affected him extremely, particularly when "a wave was billowing through a tree", as he described the uplifting surge of air among swaying masses of chestnut or oak foliage, or when, afar off, he

heard the wind coming across woodlands. "The tide! the tide!" he would cry delightedly, and . . . watch the passage of the wind upon the meadow-grasses or young corn, not stirring till the flow of air was all around him, while an expression of rapture made his eyes gleam and his face glow'.¹ In a letter to Rice (Feb. 16, 1820) his love of flowers is touchingly expressed: 'how astonishingly does the chance of leaving the world impress a sense of its natural beauties upon us! Like poor Falstaff, though I do not "babble", I think of green fields; I muse with the greatest affection on every flower I have known from my infancy—their shapes and colours are as new to me as if I had just created them with a superhuman fancy. It is because they are connected with the most thoughtless and the happiest moments of our lives. I have seen foreign flowers in hothouses, of the most beautiful nature, but I do not care a straw for them. The simple flowers of our Spring are what I want to see again'. This same sensitiveness extended to his intercourse with his fellow human beings. He was a firm friend and not to be estranged by unkindly dealing; towards his brothers and sister nothing could exceed his devotion; while for Fanny Brawne his infatuation approached madness. What his feelings were is shown to some extent by the sonnet *To Fanny* beginning 'I cry your mercy'. It should, however, in fairness be remembered that at this time he was approaching his end and was broken with illness.

It may be asked whether Keats had really developed beyond the mere sensuous stage, whether his feeling for beauty stopped short at external loveliness and was unmoved by intellectual beauty; whether he saw beauty in humanity, in man as man, in the moral problem of the Universe. If the shortness of his life be remembered, and that he had scant time for philosophizing or pondering

¹ *Life of Joseph Severn*, by William Sharp, 1892, p. 20.

over such topics, it seems certain that he had all these things in mind, although it would be too much to say that he had entirely made up his mind about them. If not, what is meant by the words from *Sleep and Poetry* :

And can I ever bid these joys farewell ?
Yes, I must pass them for a nobler life,
Where I may find the agonies, the strife
Of human hearts ?

Again from the same poem :

In *Endymion* too there is a passage to the same effect:

Peona ! ever have I long'd to slake
My thirst for the world's praises : nothing base,
No merely slumberous phantasm, could unlace
The stubborn canvas for my voyage prepar'd—
Though now 'tis tatter'd ; leaving my bark bar'd
And sullenly drifting : yet my higher hope
Is of too wide, too rainbow-large a scope,
To fret at myriads of earthly wrecks.
Wherein lies happiness ? In that which becks
Our ready minds to fellowship divine,
A fellowship with essence ; till we shine
Full alchemiz'd, and free of space.

Later in the same book he says:

No, no, I'm sure,
My restless spirit never could endure
To brood so long upon one luxury,
Unless it did, though fearfully, espouse
A hope beyond the shadow of a dream

Here there is evidence enough that Keats was not an aesthetic voluptuary, but that his mind was already filled with the 'burden of the mystery', with human sorrow

and the cares of human life. All that was wanted for further development was knowledge, and this he was determined to have. Writing to Taylor (April 24, 1818), he says : ' I mean to follow Solomon's directions, " Get learning—get understanding ". I find earlier days are gone by—I find that I can have no enjoyment in the world but continual drinking of knowledge. I find there is no worthy pursuit but the idea of doing some good for the world. Some do it with their society—some with their wit—some with their benevolence—some with a sort of power of conferring pleasure and good-humour on all they meet—and in a thousand ways, all dutiful to the command of great Nature—there is but one way for me. The road lies through application, study, and thought. I will pursue it '.

The end of poetry for Keats was not the cult of beauty of an external sort cognisable by smell or touch or sight or hearing ; his eyes are already set upon the beauty of sorrow and of joy, a beauty of the moral being and of the spirit. As the summons had come to him so he determined to follow it, for he always aimed at the highest, and he would not be false to his own words :

He ne'er is crowned
With immortality who fears to follow
Where airy voices lead.

LIFE OF JOHN KEATS

1795. John Keats born at the stables of the Swan and Hoop, Finsbury Pavement, London, October 29 or 31. George Keats born 1797; Tom, 1799; Frances Mary (Fanny), 1803.
- 1803-10. At the school in Enfield of the Rev. John Clarke, father of Charles Cowden Clarke. His father dies 1804; his mother, 1810.
1810. Apprenticed to Thomas Hammond, a surgeon of Edmonton.
1814. Leaves Hammond and studies at St. Thomas's and Guy's Hospitals.
1815. Writes sonnet *On first looking into Chapman's Homer*.
1816. Passes with credit as licentiate at Apothecaries' Hall, and is appointed dresser at Guy's. Meets Leigh Hunt and Haydon. Writes *I stood tip-toe* and *Sleep and Poetry*.
1817. First volume of Poems published (March). Meets Charles Wentworth Dilke, Charles Armitage Brown, Benjamin Bailey, and Joseph Severn. Writes *Endymion* (April–November); sonnets *On a picture of Leander* and *On the Sea*.
1818. *Endymion* published (May). After marriage of his brother George to Georgiana Wylie, tours with C. A. Brown in the north of England and Scotland (June–August). Signs of consumption. His brother Tom dies (December). Meets Fanny Brawne. Writes sonnets *When I have fears*, *The Human Seasons*, and *To Homer*; *Ode to Maia*; *Isabella*; *Meg Merrilies*; *In a drear-nighted December*; *Fancy*; *Bards of Passion*. Begins *Hyperion*.
1819. Becomes engaged to Fanny Brawne. Writes *Hyperion*; *The Eve of St. Agnes*; *Lamia*; the Odes—*To a Nightingale*, *On a Grecian Urn*, *To Psyche*, *To Autumn*, *On Melancholy*, *On Indolence*; *La Belle Dame sans merci*; *Eve of St. Mark*; sonnets *I cry your mercy* and *Bright star* (first version).

1820. Commencement of fatal illness (February 3). *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes and other Poems* published (July). Sails with Joseph Severn for Naples (September 18); writes *Bright star* (second version) off the coast of Dorset (September 28); reaches Naples (end of October) and proceeds to Rome (November).
1821. Dies at Rome, February 23. Buried in the English Cemetery, February 26.

From S H E L L E Y ' S Letters

To Charles and James Ollier.

Leghorn, September 6, 1819.

I have read your *Altham*, and Keats's poem, and Lamb's Works. For the second in this list, much praise is due to me for having read it, the author's intention appearing to be that no person should possibly get to the end of it. Yet it is full of some of the highest and the finest gleams of poetry; indeed, everything seems to be viewed by the mind of a poet which is described in it. I think if he had printed about fifty pages of fragments from it, I should have been led to admire Keats as a poet more than I ought, 10 of which there is now no danger.

To Keats.

Pisa, July 27, 1820.

I have lately read your *Endymion* again, and even with a new sense of the treasures of poetry it contains, though treasures poured forth with indistinct profusion. This, people in general will not endure, and that is the cause of the comparatively few copies which have been sold. I feel persuaded that you are capable of the greatest things, so you but will.

I always tell Ollier to send you copies of my books.— 20 *Prometheus Unbound* I imagine you will receive nearly at the same time with this letter. *The Cenci* I hope you have already received—it was studiously composed in a different style.

Below the *good* how far? but far above the *great*.

In poetry I have sought to avoid system and mannerism; I wish those who excel me in genius would pursue the same plan.

To the Editor of the 'Quarterly Review.'

Pisa, 1820.

I am aware that the first duty of a Reviewer is towards the public, and I am willing to confess that the *Endymion* is a poem considerably defective, and that, perhaps, it deserved as much censure as the pages of your Review record against it; but, not to mention that there is certain contemptuousness of phraseology from which it is difficult for a critic to abstain, in the review of *Endymion*, I do not think the writer has given it its due praise. Surely the poem, with all its faults, is a very remarkable production for a man of Keats's age, and the promise of ultimate excellence is such as has rarely been afforded even by such as have afterwards attained high literary eminence

I have just seen a second volume, published by him evidently in careless despair. I have desired my bookseller to send you a copy, and allow me to solicit your special attention to the fragment of a poem entitled *Hyperion*, the composition of which was checked by the Review in question. The great proportion of this piece is surely in the very highest style of poetry. I speak impartially, for the canons of taste to which Keats has conformed in his other compositions are the very reverse of my own.

To Joseph Severn.

Pisa, November 29, 1821.

In spite of his transcendent genius, Keats never was, or ever will be, a popular poet, and the total neglect and obscurity in which the astonishing remnants of his mind still lie was hardly to be dissipated by a writer who, however he may differ from Keats in more important qualities, at least resembles him in that accidental one, a want of popularity.

From CHARLES LAMB'S Review

The New Times, July 19, 1820.

[The review begins with a quotation from *The Eve of St. Agnes*, stanzas xxiv–xxvii.]

SUCH is the description which Mr. Keats has given us, with a delicacy worthy of Christabel, of a high-born damsel, in one of the apartments of a baronial castle, laying herself down devoutly to dream, on the charmed Eve of St. Agnes ; and like the radiance, which comes from those old windows upon the limbs and garments of the damsel, is the almost Chaucer-like painting, with which this poet illumines every subject he touches. We have scarcely anything like it in modern description. It brings us back to ancient days, and

10

Beauty making-beautiful old rhymes.

The finest thing in the volume is the paraphrase of Boccaccio's story of the Pot of Basil. Two Florentines, merchants, discovering that their sister Isabella has placed her affections upon Lorenzo, a young factor in their employ, when they had hopes of procuring for her a noble match, decoy Lorenzo, under the pretence of a ride, into a wood, where they suddenly stab and bury him. The anticipation of the assassination is wonderfully conceived in one epithet, in the narration of the ride—

20

So the two brothers, and their *murder'd* man,
Rode past fair Florence, to where Arno's stream
Gurgles—

Returning to their sister, they delude her with a story of their having sent Lorenzo abroad to look after their merchandises ; but the spirit of her lover appears to Isabella in a dream, and discovers how and where he was stabbed, and the spot where they have buried him. To ascertain the

truth of the vision, she sets out to the place, accompanied by her old nurse, ignorant as yet of her wild purpose. Her arrival at it, and digging for the body, is described in the following stanzas, than which there is nothing more awfully simple in diction, more nakedly grand and moving in sentiment, in Dante, in Chaucer, or in Spenser :

[Here stanzas xlvi–xlviii are quoted.]

More exuberantly rich in imagery and painting is the story of the Lamia. It is of as gorgeous stuff as ever romance was composed of. Her first appearance in ser-
pentine form—

a beauteous wreath with melancholy eyes—

her dialogue with Hermes, the *Star of Lethe*, as he is called by one of these prodigal phrases which Mr. Keats abounds in, which are each a poem in a word, and which in this instance lays open to us at once, like a picture, all the dim regions and their inhabitants, and the sudden coming of a celestial among them ; the charming of her into woman's shape again by the God ; her marriage with the beautiful Lycius ; her magic palace, which those who knew the street, 20 and remembered it complete from childhood, never remembered to have seen before ; the few Persian mutes, her attendants,

who that same year
Were seen about the markets : none knew where
They could inhabit ;—

the high-wrought splendours of the nuptial bower, with the fading of the whole pageantry, Lamia, and all, away, before the glance of Apollonius,—are all that fairy land can do for us. They are for younger impressibilities. 30 To us an ounce of feeling is worth a pound of fancy ; and therefore we recur again, with a warmer gratitude, to the

story of Isabella and the pot of basil, and those never-cloying stanzas which we have cited, and which we think should disarm criticism, if it be not in its nature cruel ; if it would not deny to honey its sweetness, nor to roses redness, nor light to the stars in Heaven ; if it would not bay the moon out of the skies, rather than acknowledge she is fair.

From F R A N C I S J E F F R E Y ' S Review

The Edinburgh Review, August 1820.

MR. KEATS, we understand, is still a very young man ; and his whole works, indeed, bear evidence enough of the fact. They are full of extravagance and irregularity, rash ¹⁰ attempts at originality, interminable wanderings, and excessive obscurity. They manifestly require, therefore, all the indulgence that can be claimed for a first attempt. But we think it no less plain that they deserve it : for they are flushed all over with the rich lights of fancy ; and so coloured and bestrewn with the flowers of poetry, that even while perplexed and bewildered in their labyrinths, it is impossible to resist the intoxication of their sweetness, or to shut our hearts to the enchantments they so lavishly present. The models upon which he has formed himself, ²⁰ in the *Endymion*, the earliest and by much the most considerable of his poems, are obviously *The Faithful Shepherdess* of Fletcher, and *The Sad Shepherd* of Ben Jonson ;—the exquisite metres and inspired diction of which he has copied with great boldness and fidelity—and, like his great originals, has also contrived to impart to the whole piece that true rural and poetical air—which breathes only in them and in Theocritus—which is at once homely and majestic, luxurious and rude, and sets before us the genuine sights and sounds and smells of the country, with ³⁰

all the magic and grace of Elysium. His subject has the disadvantage of being mythological; and in this respect, as well as on account of the raised and rapturous tone it consequently assumes, his poem, it may be thought, would be better compared to the *Comus* and the *Arcades* of Milton, of which, also, there are many traces of imitation. The great distinction, however, between him and these divine authors, is, that imagination in them is subordinate to reason and judgement, while, with him, it is paramount and

10 supreme—that their ornaments and images are employed to embellish and recommend just sentiments, engaging incidents, and natural characters, while his are poured out without measure or restraint, and with no apparent design but to unburden the breast of the author, and give vent to the overflowing vein of his fancy. The thin and scanty tissue of his story is merely the light framework on which his florid wreaths are suspended; and while his imaginations go rambling and entangling themselves every where, like wild honeysuckles, all idea of sober reason, and plan, and

20 consistency, is utterly forgotten, and ‘strangled in their waste fertility’. A great part of the work, indeed, is written in the strangest and most fantastical manner that can be imagined. It seems as if the author had ventured every thing that occurred to him in the shape of a glittering image or striking expression—taken the first word that presented itself to make up a rhyme, and then made that word the germ of a new cluster of images—a hint for a new excursion of the fancy,—and so wandered on, equally forgetful whence he came, and heedless whither he was going, till he had

30 covered his pages with an interminable arabesque of connected and incongruous figures, that multiplied as they extended, and were only harmonized by the brightness of their tints, and the graces of their forms. In this rash and headlong career he has of course many lapses and failures. There is no work, accordingly, from which a malicious critic

could cull more matter for ridicule, or select more obscure, unnatural, or absurd passages. But we do not take *that* to be our office ; and must beg leave, on the contrary, to say that any one who, on this account, would represent the whole poem as despicable, must either have no notion of poetry, or no regard to truth.

It is, in truth, at least as full of genius as of absurdity ; and he who does not find a great deal in it to admire and to give delight, cannot in his heart see much beauty in the two exquisite dramas to which we have already alluded ; or 10 find any great pleasure in some of the finest creations of Milton and Shakespeare. There are very many such persons, we verily believe, even among the reading and judicious part of the community—correct scholars, we have no doubt, many of them, and, it may be, very classical composers in prose and in verse, but utterly ignorant, on our view of the matter, of the true genius of English poetry, and incapable of estimating its appropriate and most exquisite beauties. With that spirit we have no hesitation in saying that Mr. Keats is deeply imbued—and of those beauties he has 20 presented us with many striking examples. We are very much inclined indeed to add, that we do not know any book which we would sooner employ as a test to ascertain whether any one had in him a native relish for poetry, and a genuine sensibility to its intrinsic charm. The greater and more distinguished poets of our country have so much in them to gratify other tastes and propensities, that they are pretty sure to captivate and amuse those to whom their poetry may be but an hindrance and obstruction, as well as those to whom it constitutes their chief attraction. The interest of 30 the stories they tell, the vivacity of the characters they delineate, the weight and force of the maxims and sentiments in which they abound, the very pathos and wit and humour they display, which may all and each of them exist apart from their poetry, and independent of it, are quite

sufficient to account for their popularity, without referring much to that still higher gift, by which they subdue to their enchantments those whose souls are truly attuned to the finer impulses of poetry. It is only, therefore, where those other recommendations are wanting, or exist in a weaker degree, that the true force of the attraction, exercised by the pure poetry with which they are so often combined, can be fairly appreciated: where, without much incident or many characters, and with little wit, wisdom, or arrangement, a 10 number of bright pictures are presented to the imagination, and a fine feeling expressed of those mysterious relations by which visible external things are assimilated with inward thoughts and emotions, and become the images and exponents of all passions and affections. To an unpoetical reader, such passages will generally appear mere raving and absurdity—and to this censure a very great part of the volumes before us will certainly be exposed, with this class of readers. Even in the judgement of a fitter audience, however, it must, we fear, be admitted, that, besides the riot 20 and extravagance of his fancy, the scope and substance of Mr. Keats's poetry is rather too dreamy and abstracted to excite the strongest interest, or to sustain the attention through a work of any great compass or extent. He deals too much with shadowy and incomprehensible beings, and is too constantly rapt into an extramundane Elysium, to command a lasting interest with ordinary mortals—and must employ the agency of more varied and coarser emotions, if he wishes to take rank with the enduring poets of this or of former generations. There is something 30 very curious, too, we think, in the way in which he, and Mr. Barry Cornwall also, have dealt with the Pagan mythology, of which they have made so much use in their poetry. Instead of presenting its imaginary persons under the trite and vulgar traits that belong to them in the ordinary systems, little more is borrowed from these than the general

conception of their condition and relations ; and an original character and distinct individuality is then bestowed upon them, which has all the merit of invention, and all the grace and attraction of the fictions on which it is engrafted. The ancients, though they probably did not stand in any great awe of their deities, have yet abstained verymuch from any minute or dramatic representation of their feelings and affections. In Hesiod and Homer they are broadly delineated by some of their actions and adventures, and introduced to us merely as the agents in those particular transactions ; 10 while in the Hymns, from those ascribed to Orpheus and Homer, down to those of Callimachus, we have little but pompous epithets and invocations, with a flattering commemoration of their most famous exploits—and are never allowed to enter into their bosoms, or follow out the train of their feelings, with the presumption of our human sympathy. Except the love-song of the Cyclops to his Sea Nymph in Theocritus, the Lamentation of Venus for Adonis in Moschus, and the more recent Legend of Apuleius, we scarcely recollect a passage in all the writings of antiquity 20 in which the passions of an immortal are fairly disclosed to the scrutiny and observation of men. The author before us, however, and some of his contemporaries, have dealt differently with the subject ;—and, sheltering the violence of the fiction under the ancient traditional fable, have in reality created and imagined an entire new set of characters ; and brought closely and minutely before us the loves and sorrows and perplexities of beings, with whose names and supernatural attributes we had long been familiar, without any sense or feeling of their personal character. We have 30 more than doubts of the fitness of such personages to maintain a permanent interest with the modern public ; but the way in which they are here managed certainly gives them the best chance that now remains for them ; and, at all events, it cannot be denied that the effect is striking

and graceful. . . . There is a fragment of a projected Epic, entitled *Hyperion*, on the expulsion of Saturn and the Titanian deities by Jupiter and his younger adherents, of which we cannot advise the completion: for, though there are passages of some force and grandeur, it is sufficiently obvious, from the specimen before us, that the subject is too far removed from all the sources of human interest, to be successfully treated by any modern author. Mr. Keats has unquestionably a very beautiful imagination, a perfect ear for harmony, and a great familiarity with the finest diction of English poetry; but he must learn not to misuse or misapply these advantages; and neither to waste the good gifts of Nature and study on intractable themes, nor to luxuriate too recklessly on such as are more suitable.

From LANDOR'S
Imaginary Conversations

From *Landor, English Visiter, and Florentine Visiter, 1828.*

Landor. Since the time of Chaucer there have been only two poets who at all resemble him; and these two are widely dissimilar one from the other, Burns and Keats. The accuracy and truth with which Chaucer has described the manners of common life, with the foreground and back-ground, are also to be found in Burns, who delights in broader strokes of external nature, but equally appropriate. He has parts of genius which Chaucer has not in the same degree; the animated and pathetic. Keats, in his *Endymion*, is richer in imagery than either: and there are passages in which no poet has arrived at the same excellence on the same ground. Time alone was wanting to complete a poet, who already far surpassed all his contemporaries in this country, in the poet's most noble attributes. . . .

English Visiter. But certainly there are blemishes in

Keats, which strike the most incurious and inobservant beholder.

Landor. If so, why expose them? why triumph over them? In Keats, I acknowledge, there are many wild thoughts, and there are expressions which even outstrip them in extravagance: but in none of our poets, with the sole exception of Shakespeare, do we find so many phrases so happy in their boldness.

English Visiter. There is a more vivid spirit, more genuine poetry, in him than in any of his contemporaries. 10

From *Southey and Landor, Second Conversation*, 1846.

Landor. When it was a matter of wonder how Keats, who was ignorant of Greek, could have written his *Hyperion*, Shelley, whom envy never touched, gave as a reason, 'Because he *was* a Greek.' *Wordsworth*, being asked his opinion of the same poem, called it, scoffingly, 'a pretty piece of paganism.' Yet he himself, in the best verses he ever wrote, and beautiful ones they are, reverts to the powerful influence of the pagan creed. . . .

Keats is the most imaginative of our poets, after Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton. 20

From LEIGH HUNT'S

Imagination and Fancy

1844

KEATS was born a poet of the most poetical kind. All his feelings came to him through a poetical medium, or were speedily coloured by it. He enjoyed a jest as heartily as any one, and sympathized with the lowliest commonplace; but the next minute his thoughts were in a garden of enchantment, with nymphs, and fauns, and shapes of exalted humanity;

Elysian beauty, melancholy grace.

It might be said of him that he never beheld an oak-tree without seeing the Dryad. His fame may now forgive the critics who disliked his politics, and did not understand his poetry. Repeated editions of him in England, France, and America, attest its triumphant survival of all obloquy ; and there can be no doubt that he has taken a permanent station among the British Poets, of a very high, if not thoroughly mature, description.

Keats's early poetry, indeed, partook plentifully of the exuberance of youth ; and even in most of his later, his sensibility, sharpened by mortal illness, tended to a morbid excess. His region is 'a wilderness of sweets'—flowers of all hue, and 'weeds of glorious feature'—where, as he says, the luxuriant soil brings

The pipy hemlock to strange overgrowth.

But there also is the 'rain-scented eglantine', and bushes of May-flowers, with bees, and myrtle, and bay—and endless paths into forests haunted with the loveliest as well as gentlest beings ; and the gods live in the distance, amid notes of majestic thunder. I do not say that no 'surfeit' is ever there ; but I do, that there is no end of the 'nectared sweets'. In what other English poet (however superior to him in other respects) are you so *certain* of never opening a page without lighting upon the loveliest imagery and the most eloquent expressions ? Name one. Compare any succession of their pages at random, and see if the young poet is not sure to present his stock of beauty ; crude it may be, in many instances ; too indiscriminate in general ; never, perhaps, thoroughly perfect in cultivation ; but there it is, exquisite of its kind, and filling envy with despair. He died at five-and-twenty ; he had not revised his earlier works, nor given his genius its last pruning. His *Endymion*, in resolving to be free from all critical trammels, had no versification ; and his last noble fragment, *Hyperion*, is not faultless—but it is nearly

so. *The Eve of St. Agnes* betrays morbidity only in one instance. Even in his earliest productions, which are to be considered as those of youth just emerging from boyhood, are to be found passages of as masculine a beauty as ever were written. Witness the *Sonnet on reading Chapman's Homer*—epical in the splendour and dignity of its images, and terminating with the noblest Greek simplicity. Among his finished productions, however, of any length, *The Eve of St. Agnes* still appears to me the most delightful and complete specimen of his genius. It stands midway between his most sensitive ones (which, though of rare beauty, occasionally sink into feebleness) and the less generally characteristic majesty of the fragment of *Hyperion*. Doubtless his greatest poetry is to be found in *Hyperion*; and had he lived, there is as little doubt he would have written chiefly in that strain; rising superior to those languishments of love which made the critics so angry, and which they might so easily have pardoned at his time of life. But *The Eve of St. Agnes* had already bid most of them adieu, exquisitely loving 20 as it is. It is young, but full-grown poetry of the rarest description; graceful as the beardless Apollo; glowing and gorgeous with the colours of romance. . . . Melancholy, it is true, will 'break in' when the reader thinks of the early death of such a writer; but it is one of the benevolent provisions of nature, that all good things tend to pleasure in the recollection; when the bitterness of their loss is past, their own sweetness embalms them.

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever.

While writing this paragraph, a hand-organ out of doors 30 has been playing one of the mournfullest and loveliest of the airs of Bellini—another genius who died young. The sound of music always gives a feeling either of triumph or tenderness to the state of mind in which it is heard: in this instance it seemed like one departed spirit come to

bear testimony to another, and to say how true indeed may be the union of sorrowful and sweet recollections.

Keats knew the youthful faults of his poetry as well as any man, as the reader may see by the preface to *Endymion*, and its touching though manly acknowledgment of them to critical 'candour. I have this moment read it again, after a lapse of years, and have been astonished to think how anybody could answer such an appeal to the mercy of strength with the cruelty of weakness. All the 10 good for which Mr. Gifford pretended to be zealous he might have effected with pain to no one, and glory to himself ; and therefore all the evil he mixed with it was of his own making. But the secret at the bottom of such unprovoked censure is exasperated inferiority. Young poets, upon the whole—at least very young poets—had better not publish at all. They are pretty sure to have faults ; and jealousy and envy are as sure to find them out, and wreak upon them their own disappointments. The critic is often an unsuccessful author, almost always an inferior one to a man of 20 genius, and possesses his sensibility neither to beauty nor to pain.

Let the student of poetry observe, that in all the luxury of *The Eve of St. Agnes* there is nothing of the conventional craft of artificial writers ; no heaping up of words or similes for their own sakes or the rhyme's sake ; no gaudy commonplaces ; no borrowed airs of earnestness ; no tricks of inversion ; no substitution of reading or of ingenious thoughts for feeling or spontaneity ; no irrelevancy or unfitness of any sort. All flows out of sincerity and 30 passion. The writer is as much in love with the heroine as his hero is ; his description of the painted window, however gorgeous, has not an untrue or superfluous word ; and the only speck of a fault in the whole poem arises from an excess of emotion.

From DAVID MASSON'S Essay

The Life and Poetry of Keats, 1860

THE most obvious characteristic of Keats's poetry is certainly its abundant sensuousness. Some of his finest little poems are all but literally lyrics of the sensuous, embodiments of the feelings of ennui, fatigue, physical languor, and the like, in tissues of fancied circumstance and sensation. Thus, in the well-known *Ode to the Nightingale*—

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk.

In this state he hears the nightingale, and straightway finds his cure—

O for a draught of vintage that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delvèd earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country-green,
Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth !
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim
And purple-stainèd mouth,
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim.

It is the same in those longer pieces of narrative phantasy which form the larger portion of his writings. Selecting, as in *Endymion*, a legend of the Grecian mythology, or, as in *Isabella, or the Pot of Basil*, a story from Boccaccio, or, as in *The Eve of St. Agnes*, the hint of a middle-age superstition, or, as in *Lamia*, a story of Greek witchcraft, he sets himself to weave out the little text of substance so

given into a linked succession of imaginary movements and incidents taking place in the dim depths of ideal scenery, whether of forest, grotto, sea-shore, the interior of a Gothic castle, or the marble vestibule of a Corinthian palace. In following him in these luxurious excursions into a world of ideal nature and life, we see his imagination winging about, as if it were his disembodied senses hovering insect-like in one humming group, all keeping together in harmony at the bidding of a higher intellectual power, and yet each 10 catering for itself in that species of circumstance which is its peculiar food. Thus, the disembodied sense of Taste—

Here is wine

Alive with sparkles—never, I aver,
Since Ariadne was a vintager,
So cool a purple: taste these juicy pears,
Sent me by sad Vertumnus, when his fears
Were high about Pomona: here is cream
Deepening to richness from a snowy gleam—
20 Sweeter than that nurse Amalthea skimm'd
For the boy Jupiter; and here, undimm'd
By any touch, a bunch of blooming plums
Ready to melt between an infant's gums.

20

Or, again, in the description of the dainties in the chapel in *The Eve of St. Agnes*—

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep
In blanchèd linen, smooth and lavender'd,
While he from forth the closet brought a heap
Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd,
30 With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
And lucent syrups tinct with cinnamon,
Manna and dates, in argosy transferr'd
From Fez, and spicèd dainties every one
From silken Samarcand to cedar'd Lebanon.

As an instance of the disembodied delight in sweet odour, take the lines in *Isabella*—

Then in a silken scarf, sweet with the dews
Of precious flowers pluck'd in Araby,
And divine liquids come with odorous ooze
Through the cold serpent-pipe refreshfully,
She wrapp'd it up.

Delicacy and richness in ideal sensations of touch and sound are found throughout. Thus, even the sensation of cold water on the hands :

When in an antechamber every guest
Had felt the cold full sponge to pleasure press'd
By ministering slaves upon his hands and feet ;

or the ideal tremulation of a string :

Be thou in the van
Of circumstance ; yea, seize the arrow's barb
Before the tense string murmur.

But let us pass to the sense of sight, with its various perceptions of colour, light, and lustre. Here Keats is, in some respects, *facile princeps*, even among our most sensuous poets. Here is the description of Lamia while she was still a serpent :

She was a gordian shape of dazzling hue,
Vermilion-spotted, golden, green, and blue,
Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard,
Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson-barr'd,
And full of silver moons that, as she breathed,
Dissolved, or brighter shone, or interwreathed
Their lustres with the gloomier tapestries.

Here is a passage somewhat more various, the description of the bower in which Adonis was sleeping—

Above his head
Four lily-stalks did their white honours wed
To make a coronal ; and round him grew
All tendrils green, of every bloom and hue,
Together intertwined and tramell'd fresh :
The vine of glossy sprout ; the ivy mesh,

Shading the Ethiop berries ; and woodbine,
Of velvet leaves and bugle-blooms divine ;
Convolvulus in streaked vases flush ;
The creeper, mellowing for an autumn blush ;
And virgin's bower, trailing airily ;
With others of the sisterhood.

These last quotations suggest a remark which does not seem unimportant. When critics or poets themselves speak of the love of nature or the perception of natural beauty as essential in the constitution of the poet, it will often be found that what they chiefly mean is an unusual sensibility to the pleasures of one of the senses—the sense of sight. What they mean is chiefly a fine sense of form, colour, lustre, and the like. Now, though it may be admitted that, in so far as ministration of material for the intellect is concerned, sight is the most important of the senses, yet this all but absolute identification of love of nature with sensibility to visual pleasures seems erroneous. It is a kind of treason to the other senses, all of which are avenues of communication between nature and the mind, though sight may be the main avenue. In this respect I believe that one of the most remarkable characteristics of Keats is the universality of his sensuousness.

But farther. Not only, in popular language, does the love of nature seem to be identified with a sensibility to the pleasures of the one sense of sight ; but, by a more injurious restriction still, this love of nature or perception of natural beauty seems to have been identified, especially of late, with one class of the pleasures of this one sense of sight—to wit, the pleasures derived from the contemplation of vegetation. Roses, lilies, grass, trees, cornfields, ferns, heaths, and poppies : these are what pass for 'nature' with not a few modern poets and critics of poetry. It seems as if, since Wordsworth fulminated the advice to poets to go back to nature and to study nature, it had been

the impression of many that the proper way to comply with the advice was to walk out in the fields to some spot where the grass was thick and the weeds and wild-flowers plentiful, and there lie flat upon the turf, chins downwards, peering into grasses and flowers, and inhaling their breath. Now, it ought to be distinctly represented, in correction of this, that ever so minute and loving a study of vegetation, though laudable and delightful in itself, does not amount to a study of nature—that, in fact, vegetation, though a very respectable part of visible nature, is not the whole ¹⁰ of it. When night comes, for example, where or how much is your vegetation then? Vegetation is *not* nature: I know no proposition that should be more frequently dinned in the ears of our young poets than this. The peculiar notion of natural beauty involved in the habit spoken of may be said to have come in with the microscope. In the ancient Greek poets we have very little of it. They give us trees and grass and flowers, but they give them more by mere suggestion; and, so far as they introduce physical nature at all (which is chiefly by way of a platform for human action), it is with the larger forms and aspects of nature that they deal, the wide and simple modifications of the great natural elements. Shakespeare, when he chooses, is minutely and lusciously rich in his scenes of vegetation (and, indeed, in comparing modern and romantic with ancient and classical poets generally, it is clear that, in this respect, there has been a gradual development of literary tendency); but no man more signally than Shakespeare keeps the just proportion. Wordsworth himself, when he called out for the study of ³⁰ nature, and set the example in his own case by retiring to the Lakes, did not commit the error of confounding nature with vegetation. In that district, indeed, where there are mountains and tarns, incessant cloud-variations, and other forms of nature on the great scale, to employ the eye, it

was not likely that it would disproportionately exercise itself on particular banks and gardens or individual herbs and flowers. Such an affection for the minutiae of vegetation was reserved perhaps for the so-called Cockney poets ; and one can see that, if it were once supposed that they introduced the taste, the fact might be humorously explained by recollecting that nature to most of them was nature as seen from Hampstead Heath.

Now, undoubtedly, Keats is great in botanical circumstance. . . . Though luscious vegetation was one of his delights, I do not think that in him there is such a disproportion between this and other kinds of imagery as there has been in other and inferior poets. There are sea and cloud in his poetry, as well as herbage and turf ; he is as rich in mineralogical and zoological circumstance as in that of botany. His most obvious characteristic, I repeat, is the universality of his sensuousness. And this it is, added to his exquisite mastery in language and verse, that makes it such a luxury to read him. In reading Shelley, even when we admire him most, there is always a sense of pain ; the influence of Keats is uniformly soothing. . . .

In virtue of that unusual and universal sensuousness which all must discern in Keats (and which, as being perhaps his most distinctive characteristic, I have chosen chiefly to illustrate in the quotations I have made), he would certainly have been very memorable among English poets, even had there been less in him than there was of that power of reflective and constructive intellect by which alone so abundant a wealth of the sensuous could have been ruled and shaped into artistic forms. The earlier poems of Shakespeare were, in the main, tissues of sensuous phantasy ; and I believe that, compared even with these, the poems that Keats has left us would not seem inferior, if the comparison could be impartially made. The same

might be said of certain portions of Spenser's poetry, the resemblance of which to much of Keats's would strike any reader acquainted with both poets, even if he did not know that Keats was a student of Spenser. Perhaps the likest poet to Keats in the whole list of preceding English poets is William Browne, the author of 'Britannia's Pastorals'; but, rich and pleasant as the poetry of Browne is, beyond much that capricious chance has preserved in greater repute, that of Keats is, in Browne's own qualities of richness and pleasantness, immeasurably ¹⁰ superior.

Neither sensuousness alone, however, nor sensuousness governed by a reflective and fanciful intellect, will constitute a great poet. However highly endowed a youthful poet may be in these, his only chance of real greatness is in passing on, by due transition and gradation, to that more matured state of mind in which, though the sensuous may remain and the cool fancy may weave its tissues as before, human interest and sympathy with the human heart and grand human action shall predominate in all. ²⁰ Now, in the case of Keats, there is evidence of the fact of this gradation. There is evidence of a progress both intellectually and morally; of a disposition, already consciously known to himself, to move forward out of the sensuous or merely sensuous-ideal mood, into the mood of the truly epic poet, the poet of life, sublimity, and action. . . . From *Endymion* itself, sensuous to very wildness as the poem is considered, scores of passages might be quoted to prove that already, while it was being written, intellect, feeling, and experience were doing their work with Keats— ³⁰ that, to use his own figure, he had then already advanced for some time out of the Infant Chamber, or Chamber of mere Sensation, into the Chamber of Maiden Thought, and had even there begun to distinguish the openings of the dark passages beyond and around, and to be seized

with the longing to explore them. Seeing this, looking then at such of his later poems as *Lamia* and *The Eve of St. Agnes*, and contemplating last of all that wonderful fragment of *Hyperion* which he hurled into the world as he was leaving it, and of which Byron but expressed the common opinion when he said 'It seems actually inspired by the Titans, and is as sublime as Æschylus', we can hardly be wrong in believing that, had Keats lived to the ordinary age of man, he would have been one of the greatest of all our poets. As it is, though he died at the age of twenty-five, and left only what in all does not amount to much more than a day's leisurely reading, I believe we shall all be disposed to place him very near indeed to our very best.

From SWINBURNE'S Essay

Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1882 : *Miscellanies*, 1886.

Two or three phrases cancelled, two or three lines erased, would have left us in *Lamia* one of the most faultless as surely as one of the most brilliant jewels in the crown of English poetry. *Isabella*, feeble and awkward in narrative to a degree almost incredible in a student of Dryden and a pupil of Leigh Hunt, is overcharged with episodical effects of splendid and pathetic expression beyond the reach of either. *The Eve of St. Agnes*, aiming at no doubtful success, succeeds in evading all casual difficulty in the line of narrative ; with no shadow of pretence to such interest 10 as may be derived from stress of incident or depth of sentiment, it stands out among all other famous poems as a perfect and unsurpassable study in pure colour and clear melody—a study in which the figure of Madeline brings back upon the mind's eye, if only as moonlight recalls a sense of sunshine, the nuptial picture of Marlowe's Hero and the sleeping presence of Shakespeare's Imogen. Beside this poem should always be placed the less famous but not less precious *Eve of St. Mark*, a fragment unexcelled for the simple perfection of its perfect simplicity, exquisite 20 alike in suggestion and in accomplishment. The triumph of *Hyperion* is as nearly complete as the failure of *Endymion* ; yet, Keats never gave such proof of a manly devotion and rational sense of duty to his art as in his resolution to leave this great poem unfinished ; not, as we may gather from his correspondence on the subject, for the pitiful reason assigned by his publishers, that of discouragement at the reception given to his former work, but on the solid and reasonable ground that a Miltonic study had something in its very scheme and nature too 30

artificial, too studious of a foreign influence, to be carried on and carried out at such length as was implied by his original design. . . . *La belle Dame sans Merci* is not less absolutely excellent, less triumphantly perfect in force and clearness of impression, than as a narrative poem is *Lamia*. In his lines on Robin Hood, and in one or two other less noticeable studies of the kind, he has shown thorough and easy mastery of the beautiful metre inherited by Fletcher from Barnfield and by Milton from Fletcher. The 10 simple force of spirit and style which distinguishes the genuine ballad manner from all spurious attempts at an artificial simplicity was once more at least achieved in his verses on the crowning creation of Scott's humaner and manlier genius—Meg Merrilie. No little injustice has been done to Keats by such devotees as fix their mind's eye only on the more salient and distinctive notes of a genius which in fact was very much more various and tentative, less limited and peculiar, than would be inferred from an exclusive study of his more specially characteristic 20 work. But within the limits of that work must we look of course for the genuine credentials of his fame; and highest among them we must rate his unequalled and unrivalled odes. Of these perhaps the two nearest to absolute perfection, to the triumphant achievement and accomplishment of the very utmost beauty possible to human words, may be that to Autumn and that on a Grecian Urn; the most radiant, fervent, and musical is that to a Nightingale; the most pictorial and perhaps the tenderest in its ardour of passionate fancy is that to Psyche; the subtlest in 30 sweetness of thought and feeling is that on Melancholy. Greater lyrical poetry the world may have seen than any that is in these; lovelier it surely has never seen, nor ever can it possibly see. From the divine fragment of an unfinished ode to Maia we can but guess that if completed it would have been worthy of a place beside the highest.

His remaining lyrics have many beauties about them, but none perhaps can be called thoroughly beautiful. He has certainly left us one perfect sonnet of the first rank ; and as certainly he has left us but one.

From ROBERT BRIDGES' Essay

Introduction to *Poems of John Keats*, 1894; revised 1914.

The Odes. Had Keats left us only his Odes, his rank among the poets would not be lower than it is, for they have stood apart in literature, at least the six most famous of them ; and these were all written in his best period, when he was under the Miltonic influence—that is, between the early spring of 1819, while he was still engaged on *Hyperion*, 10 and the autumn, when he discarded it. These are the six : 1. *Psyche* ; 2. *Melancholy* ; 3. *Nightingale* ; 4. *Greek Urn* ; 5. *Indolence* ; 6. *Autumn*.

To these should be added 7. the fragment of the *May Ode*, May 1, 1818, and 8. the *Ode to Pan*, from *Endymion*, bk. i., and 9. the *Bacchic Ode to Sorrow* in *Endymion*, bk. iv. But the two hymns to *Neptune* and *Diana* in *Endymion* are only worth enumeration, and the two early odes to *Apollo* and the *Ode to a Lock of Milton's Hair* are, as are the two later *Odes to Fanny*, chiefly or entirely of personal 20 interest.

Of the seven odes first enumerated, if we rank them merely according to perfection of workmanship, the one that was last written, that is the *Ode to Autumn*, will claim the highest place ; and unless it be objected as a slight blemish that the words 'Think not of them' in the second line of the third stanza are somewhat awkwardly addressed to a personification of Autumn, I do not know that any sort

of fault can be found in it. But this ode does not in any part of it reach the marvellous heights attained by several of the others in their best places, and even if judged as a whole it is left far behind by the splendour of the *Nightingale*, in which the mood is more intense, and the poetry vies in richness and variety with its subject.

The song of the nightingale is, to the hearer, full of assertion, promise, and cheerful expectancy, and of pleading and tender passionate overflowing in long drawn-out 10 notes, interspersed with plenty of playfulness and conscious exhibitions of musical skill. Whatever pain or sorrow may be expressed by it, it is idealized—that is, it is not the sorrow of a sufferer, but the perfect expression of sorrow by an artist, who must have felt, but is not feeling; and the ecstasy of the nightingale is stronger than its sorrow, although different hearers may be differently affected according to their mood. Keats in a sad mood seized on the happy interpretation and promise of it, and gives it in this line—

20 ‘Singest of *summer* in full-throated ease.’

But the intense feeling in his description of human sorrow (stanza 3) is weakened by the direct platitude that the bird has never known it; and in the penultimate stanza the thought is fanciful or superficial—man being as immortal as the bird in every sense but that of sameness, which is assumed and does not satisfy. The introduction, too, of the last stanza is artificial, while his choosing *self* for a rhyme-word¹ turns out disastrously; and he loses hold of his main idea in the words ‘plaintive anthem’, which, in expressing 30 the dying away of the sound, changes its character. No

¹ The elf belongs to W. Brown of Tavistock, whom I suspect to have been the remote cause of the hitch in the first stanza—

‘Philomel, I do not envy thy sweet carolling.’

Brit. Past. i. 3, 164.

praise, however, could be too high for those last six lines ; and if grammar and sense are a little obscure in the first ten, I could not name any English poem of the same length which contains so much beauty as this ode.

Next to this I should rank *Melancholy*. The perception in this ode is profound, and no doubt experienced. The paradox that melancholy is most deeply felt by the organization most capable of joy is clinched at the end by the observation of the reaction which satiety provokes in such temperaments, so that it is also in the moment of extremest joy that it suddenly fades—

‘ Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips :
Ay, in the very temple of Delight
Veil’d Melancholy has her sovran shrine.’

In spite of the great beauty of this ode, especially of the last stanza, it does not hit so hard as one would expect. I do not know whether this is due to a false note towards the end of the second stanza, or to a disagreement between the second and third stanzas. In the second stanza the melancholy is, as Lord Houghton said, a ‘ luxurious tenderness ’, while in the third it is strong, painful, and incurable. The line—

‘ That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,’

means all the flowers only that are sacred to sorrow. See *Endymion* iv. 170.

Next in order might come *Psyche*, for the sake of the last section (l. 50 to end), though this is open to the objection that the imagery is worked up to outface the idea—which is characteristic of Keats’ manner. Yet the extreme beauty quenches every dissatisfaction. The beginning of this ode is not so good, and the middle part is midway in excellence.

Next, and disputing place with the last, comes the *Grecian Urn*. The thought as enounced in the first stanza is the

supremacy of ideal art over Nature, because of its unchanging expression of perfection ; and this is true and beautiful ; but its amplification in the poem is unprogressive, monotonous, and scattered, the attention being called to fresh details without result (see espec. ll. 21-4, anticipated in 15, 16), which gives an effect of poverty in spite of the beauty. The last stanza enters stumbling on a pun, but its concluding lines are very fine, and make a sort of recovery with their forcible directness.

10 The last of the six, *Indolence*, is the objective picturing of a transient mood, and may be the description of an actual half-waking vision. If the details, such as the appearing of the figures four times, have no definite meaning, and I cannot fix any, they are too arbitrary. Parts of stanzas 2 and 3 and all the 5th are of the best work ; but the whole ode scarcely earns its title ; and its main interest, that is its fervour and feeling, betrays the poet into an undignified utterance in line 4 of the last verse.

20 The fragment of the *May Ode* is immortal on account of the famous passage of inimitable beauty descriptive of the Greek poets—

‘Leaving great verse unto a little clan,’ &c.

With these seven the two chief odes in *Endymion* are worthy to rank. The ode to Pan in Book I is good enough in design. Pan is first invoked as ruler in dark and moist woods ; secondly, as the god to whom all natural products are sacred, with contrast of sunny places ; thirdly, as king of fauns and satyrs ; fourthly, for six lines as farm-god. But this last idea has been anticipated by interpolation in the 30 previous section. Then the last part of the ode connects Pan with the secrets and power of Nature. The expression *But no more*, however interpreted, is unfortunate at the end of the ode. The diction throughout is rich and the imagery chosen well for the work that it has to do in the various

aspects of the god's energy, the different objects being seized and shown in happy phrases full of knowledge and feeling ; and though it might perhaps have been better if the second section had immediately preceded the last, rather than that the mysteries should follow close on the farm, there is no great fault to find. But yet the ode does not at first reading make an impression corresponding to these merits, nor has it won, like the others, a high reputation ; and this may be due partly to the vagueness of the personification, caused by the variety of attributes and ¹⁰ objects, and partly to the versification, which, though generally easy and fluent, pauses, especially in the second division, too frequently in the mid-line, in the manner of tagging, and produces there something of the effect of a catalogue, very foreign to the repose and finish which we look for in a set ode.

Lastly, as to the *Ode to Sorrow* in the 4th book of *Endymion*, I regard this as one of the greatest of Keats' achievements, and agree with all that Mr. Sidney Colvin has said in its praise in his *Life of Keats*. It unfortunately halts in ²⁰ the opening, and the first and fourth stanzas especially are unequal to the rest, as is again the third from the end, 'Young stranger,' which for its matter would with more propriety have been cast into the previous section ; and these impoverish the effect, and contain expressions which might put some readers off. If they would begin at the fifth stanza and omit the third from the end, they would find little that is not admirable. And, as it stands, the ode is, I think, the better for these omissions. The pictorial description of the Bacchic procession is unmatched for life, ³⁰ wide motion, and romantic dreamy Orientalism, while the concluding stanzas, returning to the first movement, are as lovely as any Elizabethan lyric, and in the same manner. The bold contrast and passion of the ode, in spite of its weaker opening and the few expressions which remind one

that it is an early work, give it a unique place among the richest creations of the English Muse.

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General. In these detached criticisms many of the main qualities of Keats' poetry have been incidentally brought out ; there is one, as yet unmentioned, which claims the first place in a general description, and that is the very seal of his poetic birthright, the highest gift of all in poetry, that which sets poetry above the other arts ; I mean the power of concentrating all the far-reaching resources of

language on one point, so that a single and apparently effortless expression rejoices the aesthetic imagination at the moment when it is most expectant and exacting, and at the same time astonishes the intellect with a new aspect of truth. This is only found in the greatest poets, and is rare in them ; and it is no doubt for the possession of this power that Keats has been often likened to Shakespeare, and very justly, for Shakespeare is of all poets the greatest master of it ; the difference between them here is that Keats' intellect does not supply the second factor in the proportion or degree that Shakespeare does ; indeed, it is chiefly when he is dealing with material and sensuous subjects that his poems afford illustrations ; but these are, as far as they go, not only like Shakespeare, but often as good as Shakespeare when he happens to be confining himself to the same limited field. Examples from Shakespeare are such well-known sayings as these—

‘ My way of life
Is fain into the sear, the yellow leaf.’—*Macbeth*.

‘ Lay not that flattering unction to your soul.’—*Hamlet*.

30 ‘ We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.’—*Tempest*.

Examples from Keats are—

‘The journey homeward to habitual self.’

‘Solitary thinkings ; such as dodge
Conception to the very bourne of heaven.’

‘My sleep had been embroider’d with dim dreams.’

In most of Keats’ phrases of this sort there is a quality which makes them unlike Shakespeare ; and if we should put into one group all those which are absolutely satisfactory, and then make a second group of those which are not so simply convincing, we should find in these last that 10 the un-Shakespearian quality was more declared, and came out as something fanciful, or rather too vaguely or venturesomely suggestive ; the whole phrase displaying its poetry rather than its meaning, and being in consequence less apt and masterly. This second group would contain many of the most admired lines of Keats, and these are very characteristic of him. Such are—

‘Those green-rob’d senators of mighty woods,
Tall oaks,’

and—

‘How tiptoe Night holds back her dark-grey hood.’

20

The *Revision of Hyperion* shows that Keats himself was dissatisfied with his *senators* ; and one can see the reason without condemning the passage or approving its omission. Finally, there would be left a third group of such-like phrases which plainly miss the mark.

Closely allied to these imaginative phrases, and perhaps more characteristic of Keats and peculiar to him, are the short vivid pictures which may be called his masterpieces of word-painting, in which with a few words he contrives 30 completely to finish a picture which is often of vast size. Good examples of this are the sestet of the *Leander* sonnet ; the last four lines of the *Chapman’s Homer* ; the passage

beginning *Golden his hair* in *Hyperion* ii. 371 ; and, to quote one from *Endymion*—

‘ The woes of Troy, towers smothering o’er their blaze,
Stiff-holden shields, far-piercing spears, keen blades,
Struggling, and blood, and shrieks.’

For its wealth in such rare strokes of descriptive imagination Keats’ poetry must always take the very first rank ; and it is his imaginative quality of phrase which sets him more than any other poet of his time in creative antagonism to the eighteenth-century writers.

Selections from
KEATS'S
POETRY and LETTERS

POEMS OF 1817

From SLEEP AND POETRY

STOP and consider ! life is but a day ; 85

A fragile dew-drop on its perilous way

From a tree's summit ; a poor Indian's sleep

While his boat hastens to the monstrous steep
Of Montmorenci. Why so sad a moan ?

Life is the rose's hope while yet unblown ; 90

The reading of an ever-changing tale ;

The light uplifting of a maiden's veil ;

A pigeon tumbling in clear summer air ;

A laughing school-boy, without grief or care,
Riding the springy branches of an elm.

O for ten years, that I may overwhelm

Myself in poesy ; so I may do the deed

That my own soul has to itself decreed.

Then will I pass the countries that I see

In long perspective, and continually 100

Taste their pure fountains. First the realm I'll pass

Of Flora, and old Pan : sleep in the grass,

Feed upon apples red, and strawberries,

And choose each pleasure that my fancy sees ;

Catch the white-handed nymphs in shady places,

To woo sweet kisses from averted faces,—

Play with their fingers, touch their shoulders white

Into a pretty shrinking with a bite

As hard as lips can make it : till agreed,

A lovely tale of human life we'll read.

And one will teach a tame dove how it best

May fan the cool air gently o'er my rest ;

Another, bending o'er her nimble tread,

Will set a green robe floating round her head,
 And still will dance with ever varied ease,
 Smiling upon the flowers and the trees :
 Another will entice me on, and on
 Through almond blossoms and rich cinnamon ;
 Till in the bosom of a leafy world
 We rest in silence, like two gems upcurl'd
 In the recesses of a pearly shell.

120

And can I ever bid these joys farewell ?
 Yes, I must pass them for a nobler life,
 Where I may find the agonies, the strife
 Of human hearts : for lo ! I see afar,
 O'ersailing the blue cragginess, a car
 And steeds with creamy manes—the charioteer
 Looks out upon the winds with glorious fear :
 And now the numerous tramplings quiver lightly
 Along a huge cloud's ridge ; and now with sprightly 130
 Wheel downward come they into fresher skies,
 Tipt round with silver from the sun's bright eyes.
 Still downward with capacious whirl they glide ;
 And now I see them on the green-hill's side
 In breezy rest among the nodding stalks.
 The charioteer with wond'rous gesture talks
 To the trees and mountains ; and there soon appear
 Shapes of delight, of mystery, and fear,
 Passing along before a dusky space
 Made by some mighty oaks : as they would chase 140
 Some ever-fleeting music on they sweep.
 Lo ! how they murmur, laugh, and smile, and weep
 Some with upholden hand and mouth severe ;
 Some with their faces muffled to the ear
 Between their arms ; some, clear in youthful bloom,
 Go glad and smilingly athwart the gloom ;
 Some looking back, and some with upward gaze ;

Yes, thousands in a thousand different ways
 Flit onward—now a lovely wreath of girls
 Dancing their sleek hair into tangled curls ;
 And now broad wings. Most awfully intent
 The driver of those steeds is forward bent,
 And seems to listen : O that I might know
 All that he writes with such a hurrying glow.

150

The visions all are fled—the car is fled
 Into the light of heaven, and in their stead
 A sense of real things comes doubly strong,
 And, like a muddy stream, would bear along
 My soul to nothingness : but I will strive
 Against all doubtings, and will keep alive
 The thought of that same chariot, and the strange
 Journey it went.

160

Is there so small a range
 In the present strength of manhood, that the high
 Imagination cannot freely fly
 As she was wont of old ? prepare her steeds,
 Paw up against the light, and do strange deeds
 Upon the clouds ? Has she not shown us all ?
 From the clear space of ether, to the small
 Breath of new buds unfolding ? From the meaning
 Of Jove's large eye-brow, to the tender greening
 Of April meadows ? Here her altar shone,
 E'en in this isle ; and who could paragon
 The fervid choir that lifted up a noise
 Of harmony, to where it aye will poise
 Its mighty self of convoluting sound,
 Huge as a planet, and like that roll round,
 Eternally around a dizzy void ?
 Ay, in those days the Muses were nigh cloy'd
 With honors ; nor had any other care
 Than to sing out and sooth their wavy hair.

170

180

Could all this be forgotten ? Yes, a schism
 Nurtured by foppery and barbarism,
 Made great Apollo blush for this his land.
 Men were thought wise who could not understand
 His glories : with a puling infant's force
 They sway'd about upon a rocking horse,
 And thought it Pegasus. Ah dismal soul'd !
 The winds of heaven blew, the ocean roll'd
 Its gathering waves—ye felt it not. The blue
 Bared its eternal bosom, and the dew
 Of summer nights collected still to make
 The morning precious : beauty was awake !
 Why were ye not awake ? But ye were dead
 To things ye knew not of,—were closely wed
 To musty laws lined out with wretched rule
 And compass vile : so that ye taught a school
 Of dolts to smooth, inlay, and clip, and fit,
 Till, like the certain wands of Jacob's wit,
 Their verses tallied. Easy was the task :
 A thousand handicraftsmen wore the mask
 Of Poesy. Ill-fated, impious race !
 That blasphemed the bright Lyrist to his face,
 And did not know it,—no, they went about,
 Holding a poor, decrepid standard out
 Mark'd with most flimsy mottos, and in large
 The name of one Boileau !

O ye whose charge
 It is to hover round our pleasant hills !
 Whose congregated majesty so fills
 My boundly reverence, that I cannot trace
 Your hallowed names, in this unholy place,
 So near those common folk ; did not their shames
 Affright you ? Did our old lamenting Thames
 Delight you ? Did ye never cluster round

190

200

210

Delicious Avon, with a mournful sound,
 And weep? Or did ye wholly bid adieu
 To regions where no more the laurel grew?
 Or did ye stay to give a welcoming
 To some lone spirits who could proudly sing
 Their youth away, and die? 'Twas even so:
 But let me think away those times of woe:
 Now 'tis a fairer season; ye have breathed
 Rich benedictions o'er us; ye have wreathed
 Fresh garlands: for sweet music has been heard
 In many places;—some has been upstirr'd
 From out its crystal dwelling in a lake,
 By a swan's ebon bill; from a thick brake,
 Nested and quiet in a valley mild,
 Bubbles a pipe; fine sounds are floating wild
 About the earth: happy are ye and glad.

220

These things are doubtless: yet in truth we've had
 Strange thunders from the potency of song;
 Mingled indeed with what is sweet and strong,
 From majesty: but in clear truth the themes
 Are ugly clubs, the Poets Polyphemes
 Disturbing the grand sea. A drainless shower
 Of light is poesy; 'tis the supreme of power;
 'Tis might half slumb'ring on its own right arm.
 The very archings of her eye-lids charm
 A thousand willing agents to obey,
 And still she governs with the mildest sway:
 But strength alone though of the Muses born
 Is like a fallen angel: trees upturn,
 Darkness, and worms, and shrouds, and sepulchres
 Delight it; for it feeds upon the burrs,
 And thorns of life; forgetting the great end
 Of poesy, that it should be a friend
 To sooth the cares, and lift the thoughts of man.

230

240

From

I STOOD TIP-TOE UPON A LITTLE HILL

OPEN afresh your round of starry folds,

Ye ardent marigolds !

Dry up the moisture from your golden lids,

For great Apollo bids

50

That in these days your praises should be sung

On many harps, which he has lately strung :

And when again your dewiness he kisses,

Tell him, I have you in my world of blisses :

So haply when I rove in some far vale,

His mighty voice may come upon the gale.

Here are sweet-peas, on tip-toe for a flight :

With wings of gentle flush o'er delicate white,

And taper fingers catching at all things,

To bind them all about with tiny rings.

60

Linger awhile upon some bending planks

That lean against a streamlet's rushy banks,

And watch intently Nature's gentle doings :

They will be found softer than ring-dove's cooings.

How silent comes the water round that bend ;

Not the minutest whisper does it send

To the o'erhanging sallows : blades of grass

Slowly across the chequer'd shadows pass.

Why, you might read two sonnets, ere they reach

To where the hurrying freshnesses aye preach

70

A natural sermon o'er their pebbly beds ;

Where swarms of minnows show their little heads,

Staying their wavy bodies 'gainst the streams,

To taste the luxury of sunny beams

Temper'd with coolness. How they ever wrestle

With their own sweet delight, and ever nestle

Their silver bellies on the pebbly sand.
 If you but scantily hold out the hand,
 That very instant not one will remain ;
 But turn your eye, and they are there again. 80
 The ripples seem right glad to reach those cresses,
 And cool themselves among the em'rald tresses ;
 The while they cool themselves, they freshness give,
 And moisture, that the bowery green may live :
 So keeping up an interchange of favours,
 Like good men in the truth of their behaviours.
 Sometimes goldfinches one by one will drop
 From low hung branches ; little space they stop ;
 But sip, and twitter, and their feathers sleek ;
 Then off at once, as in a wanton freak : 90
 Or perhaps, to show their black, and golden wings,
 Pausing upon their yellow flutterings.

SONNET

ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S HOMER

MUCH have I travell'd in the realms of gold,
 And many goodly states and kingdoms seen ;
 Round many western islands have I been
 Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
 Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
 That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne ;
 Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
 Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold :
 Then felt I like some watcher of the skies 10
 When a new planet swims into his ken ;
 Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
 He star'd at the Pacific—and all his men
 Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
 Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

ENDYMION

A POETIC ROMANCE

INSCRIBED TO THE MEMORY OF

THOMAS CHATTERTON

1818

PREFACE

KNOWING within myself the manner in which this Poem has been produced, it is not without a feeling of regret that I make it public.

What manner I mean, will be quite clear to the reader, who must soon perceive great inexperience, immaturity, and every error denoting a feverish attempt, rather than a deed accomplished. The two first books, and indeed the two last, I feel sensible are not of such completion as to warrant their passing the press; nor should they if I thought a year's castigation would do them any good;—it will not: ^{1c} the foundations are too sandy. It is just that this youngster should die away: a sad thought for me, if I had not some hope that while it is dwindling I may be plotting, and fitting myself for verses fit to live.

This may be speaking too presumptuously, and may deserve a punishment: but no feeling man will be forward to inflict it: he will leave me alone, with the conviction that there is not a fiercer hell than the failure in a great object. This is not written with the least atom of purpose to fore-stall criticisms of course, but from the desire I have to con- ²⁰ ciliate men who are competent to look, and who do look with a zealous eye, to the honour of English literature.

The imagination of a boy is healthy, and the mature imagination of a man is healthy ; but there is a space of life between, in which the soul is in a ferment, the character undecided, the way of life uncertain, the ambition thick-sighted : thence proceeds mawkishness, and all the thousand bitters which those men I speak of must necessarily taste in going over the following pages.

30 I hope I have not in too late a day touched the beautiful mythology of Greece, and dulled its brightness : for I wish to try once more, before I bid it farewell.

TEIGNMOUTH, *April 10, 1818*

BOOK I

A THING of beauty is a joy for ever :
 Its loveliness increases ; it will never
 Pass into nothingness ; but still will keep
 A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
 Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.
 Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing
 A flowery band to bind us to the earth,
 Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth
 Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,
 Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways
 Made for our searching : yes, in spite of all,
 Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
 From our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon,
 Trees old, and young, sprouting a shady boon
 For simple sheep ; and such are daffodils
 With the green world they live in ; and clear rills
 That for themselves a cooling covert make
 'Gainst the hot season ; the mid forest brake,
 Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms :

And such too is the grandeur of the dooms
 We have imagined for the mighty dead ;
 All lovely tales that we have heard or read :
 An endless fountain of immortal drink,
 Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.

20

Nor do we merely feel these essences
 For one short hour ; no, even as the trees
 That whisper round a temple become soon
 Dear as the temple's self, so does the moon,
 The passion poesy, glories infinite,
 Haunt us till they become a cheering light
 Unto our souls, and bound to us so fast,
 That, whether there be shine, or gloom o'ercast,
 They always must be with us, or we die.

30

Therefore, 'tis with full happiness that I
 Will trace the story of Endymion.
 The very music of the name has gone
 Into my being, and each pleasant scene
 Is growing fresh before me as the green
 Of our own vallies : so I will begin
 Now while I cannot hear the city's din ;
 Now while the early budders are just new,
 And run in mazes of the youngest hue
 About old forests ; while the willow trails
 Its delicate amber ; and the dairy pails
 Bring home increase of milk. And, as the year
 Grows lush in juicy stalks, I'll smoothly steer
 My little boat, for many quiet hours,
 With streams that deepen freshly into bowers.
 Many and many a verse I hope to write,
 Before the daisies, vermeil rimm'd and white,
 Hide in deep herbage ; and ere yet the bees
 Hum about globes of clover and sweet peas,
 I must be near the middle of my story.

40

50

O may no wintry season, bare and hoary,
 See it half finish'd : but let Autumn bold,
 With universal tinge of sober gold,
 Be all about me when I make an end.
 And now at once, adventuresome, I send
 My herald thought into a wilderness :
 There let its trumpet blow, and quickly dress
 My uncertain path with green, that I may speed
 Easily onward, thorough flowers and weed.

60

Soon the assembly, in a circle rang'd, 185
 Stood silent round the shrine : each look was chang'd
 To sudden veneration : women meek
 Beckon'd their sons to silence ; while each cheek
 Of virgin bloom paled gently for slight fear.
 Endymion too, without a forest peer, 190
 Stood, wan, and pale, and with an awed face,
 Among his brothers of the mountain chace.
 In midst of all, the venerable priest
 Eyed them with joy from greatest to the least,
 And, after lifting up his aged hands,
 Thus spake he : ' Men of Latmos ! shepherd bands !
 Whose care it is to guard a thousand flocks :
 Whether descended from beneath the rocks
 That overtop your mountains ; whether come
 From vallies where the pipe is never dumb ; 200
 Or from your swelling downs, where sweet air stirs
 Blue hare-bells lightly, and where prickly furze
 Buds lavish gold ; or ye, whose precious charge
 Nibble their fill at ocean's very marge,
 Whose mellow reeds are touch'd with sounds forlorn
 By the dim echoes of old Triton's horn :
 Mothers and wives ! who day by day prepare
 The scrip, with needments, for the mountain air ;

200

And all ye gentle girls who foster up
 Udderless lambs, and in a little cup
 Will put choice honey for a favoured youth :
 Yea, every one attend ! for in good truth
 Our vows are wanting to our great god Pan.
 Are not our lowing heifers sleeker than
 Night-swollen mushrooms ? Are not our wide plains
 Speckled with countless fleeces ? Have not rains
 Green'd over April's lap ? No howling sad
 Sickens our fearful ewes ; and we have had
 Great bounty from Endymion our lord.
 The earth is glad : the merry lark has pour'd
 His early song against yon breezy sky,
 That spreads so clear o'er our solemnity.'

210

Thus ending, on the shrine he heap'd a spire
 Of teeming sweets, enkindling sacred fire ;
 Anon he stain'd the thick and spongy sod
 With wine, in honour of the shepherd-god.
 Now while the earth was drinking it, and while
 Bay leaves were crackling in the fragrant pile,
 And gummy frankincense was sparkling bright
 'Neath smothering parsley, and a hazy light
 Spread greily eastward, thus a chorus sang :

220

‘ O THOU, whose mighty palace roof doth hang
 From jagged trunks, and overshadoweth
 Eternal whispers, glooms, the birth, life, death
 Of unseen flowers in heavy peacefulness ;
 Who lov'st to see the hamadryads dress
 Their ruffled locks where meeting hazels darken ;
 And through whole solemn hours dost sit, and hearken
 The dreary melody of bedded reeds—
 In desolate places, where dank moisture breeds
 The pipy hemlock to strange overgrowth ;
 Bethinking thee, how melancholy loth

230

Thou wast to lose fair Syrinx—do thou now,
 By thy love's milky brow !
 By all the trembling mazes that she ran,
 Hear us, great Pan !

‘ O thou, for whose soul-soothing quiet, turtles
 Passion their voices cooingly 'mong myrtles,
 What time thou wanderest at eventide
 Through sunny meadows, that outskirt the side 250
 Of thine enmossed realms : O thou, to whom
 Broad leaved fig trees even now foredoom
 Their ripen'd fruitage ; yellow girted bees
 Their golden honeycombs ; our village leas
 Their fairest blossom'd beans and poppied corn ;
 The chuckling linnet its five young unborn,
 To sing for thee ; low creeping strawberries
 Their summer coolness ; pent up butterflies
 Their freckled wings ; yea, the fresh budding year
 All its completions—be quickly near, 260
 By every wind that nods the mountain pine,
 O forester divine !

‘ Thou, to whom every faun and satyr flies
 For willing service ; whether to surprise
 The squatted hare while in half sleeping fit ;
 Or upward ragged precipices flit
 To save poor lambkins from the eagle's maw ;
 Or by mysterious enticement draw 270
 Bewildered shepherds to their path again ;
 Or to tread breathless round the frothy main,
 And gather up all fancifullest shells
 For thee to tumble into Naiads' cells,
 And, being hidden, laugh at their out-peeping ;
 Or to delight thee with fantastic leaping,
 The while they pelt each other on the crown
 With silvery oak apples, and fir cones brown—

By all the echoes that about thee ring,
Hear us, O satyr king !

‘ O Hearkener to the loud clapping shears
While ever and anon to his shorn peers
A ram goes bleating : Winder of the horn,
When snouted wild-boars routing tender corn
Anger our huntsmen : Breather round our farms,
To keep off mildews, and all weather harms :
Strange ministrant of undescribed sounds,
That come a swooning over hollow grounds,
And wither drearily on barren moors :
Dread opener of the mysterious doors
Leading to universal knowledge—see,
Great son of Dryope,
The many that are come to pay their vows
With leaves about their brows !

280

290

‘ Be still the unimaginable lodge
For solitary thinkings ; such as dodge
Conception to the very bourne of heaven,
Then leave the naked brain : be still the leaven,
That spreading in this dull and clodded earth
Gives it a touch ethereal—a new birth :
Be still a symbol of immensity ;
A firmament reflected in a sea ;
An element filling the space between ;
An unknown—but no more : we humbly screen
With uplift hands our foreheads, lowly bending,
And giving out a shout most heaven rending,
Conjure thee to receive our humble Pæan,
Upon thy Mount Lycean ! ’

300

Even while they brought the burden to a close,
A shout from the whole multitude arose,
That lingered in the air like dying rolls
Of abrupt thunder, when Ionian shoals

310

Of dolphins bob their noses through the brine.
 Meantime, on shady levels, mossy fine,
 Young companies nimbly began dancing
 To the swift treble pipe, and humming string.
 Aye, those fair living forms swam heavenly
 To tunes forgotten—out of memory :
 Fair creatures ! whose young children's children bred
 Thermopylæ its heroes—not yet dead,
 But in old marbles ever beautiful.

BOOK IV

‘ DEAR lady,’ said Endymion, ‘ ‘tis past :
 I love thee ! and my days can never last.
 That I may pass in patience still speak :
 Let me have music dying, and I seek 140
 No more delight—I bid adieu to all.
 Didst thou not after other climates call,
 And murmur about Indian streams ? —Then she,
 Sitting beneath the midmost forest tree,
 For pity sang this roundelay——

‘ O Sorrow,
 Why dost borrow
 The natural hue of health, from vermeil lips ? —
 To give maiden blushes
 To the white rose bushes ? 150
 Or is’t thy dewy hand the daisy tips ?

‘ O Sorrow,
 Why dost borrow
 The lustrous passion from a falcon-eye ? —
 To give the glow-worm light ?
 Or, on a moonless night,
 To tinge, on syren shores, the salt sea-spry ?

‘ O Sorrow,
 Why dost borrow
 The mellow ditties from a mourning tongue ?— 160
 To give at evening pale
 Unto the nightingale,
 That thou mayst listen the cold dews among ?

‘ O Sorrow,
 Why dost borrow
 Heart’s lightness from the merriment of May ?—
 A lover would not tread
 A cowslip on the head,
 Though he should dance from eve till peep of day—
 Nor any drooping flower 170
 Held sacred for thy bower,
 Wherever he may sport himself and play.

‘ To Sorrow,
 I bade good-morrow,
 And thought to leave her far away behind ;
 But cheerly, cheerly,
 She loves me dearly ;
 She is so constant to me, and so kind :
 I would deceive her
 And so leave her, 180
 But ah ! she is so constant and so kind.

‘ Beneath my palm trees, by the river side,
 I sat a weeping : in the whole world wide
 There was no one to ask me why I wept,—
 And so I kept
 Brimming the water-lilly cups with tears
 Cold as my fears.

‘ Beneath my palm trees, by the river side,
 I sat a weeping : what enamour’d bride,

Cheated by shadowy wooer from the clouds,

190

But hides and shrouds

Beneath dark palm trees by a river side ?

' And as I sat, over the light blue hills
There came a noise of revellers : the rills
Into the wide stream came of purple hue—

' Twas Bacchus and his crew !

The earnest trumpet spake, and silver thrills
From kissing cymbals made a merry din—

' Twas Bacchus and his kin !

Like to a moving vintage down they came,

200

Crown'd with green leaves, and faces all on flame ;
All madly dancing through the pleasant valley,

To scare thee, Melancholy !

O then, O then, thou wast a simple name !

And I forgot thee, as the berried holly

By shepherds is forgotten, when, in June,

Tall chestnuts keep away the sun and moon :—

I rush'd into the folly !

' Within his car, aloft, young Bacchus stood,

Trifling his ivy-dart, in dancing mood,

210

With sidelong laughing ;

And little rills of crimson wine imbruued

His plump white arms, and shoulders, enough white

For Venus' pearly bite :

And near him rode Silenus on his ass,

Pelted with flowers as he on did pass

Tipsily quaffing.

' Whence came ye, merry Damsels ! whence came ye !

So many, and so many, and such glee ?

Why have ye left your bowers desolate,

220

Your lutes and gentler fate ?—

" We follow Bacchus ! Bacchus on the wing,

A conquering !

Bacchus, young Bacchus ! good or ill betide,
 We dance before him thorough kingdoms wide :—
 Come hither, lady fair, and joined be
 To our wild minstrelsy ! ”

“ Whence came ye, jolly Satyrs ! whence came ye !
 So many, and so many, and such glee ?

Why have ye left your forest haunts, why left 230
 Your nuts in oak-tree cleft ?—

“ For wine, for wine we left our kernel tree ;
 For wine we left our heath, and yellow brooms,
 And cold mushrooms :

For wine we follow Bacchus through the earth ;
 Great God of breathless cups and chirping mirth !—
 Come hither, lady fair, and joined be
 To our mad minstrelsy ! ”

“ Over wide streams and mountains great we went,
 And, save when Bacchus kept his ivy tent, 240
 Onward the tiger and the leopard pants,
 With Asian elephants :

Onward these myriads—with song and dance,
 With zebras striped, and sleek Arabians’ prance,
 Web-footed alligators, crocodiles,
 Bearing upon their scaly backs, in files,
 Plump infant laughers mimicking the coil
 Of seamen, and stout galley-rowers’ toil :
 With toying oars and silken sails they glide,
 Nor care for wind and tide. 250

“ Mounted on panthers’ furs and lions’ manes,
 From rear to van they scour about the plains ;
 A three days’ journey in a moment done :
 And always, at the rising of the sun,
 About the wilds they hunt with spear and horn,
 On spleenful unicorn.

‘ I saw Osirian Egypt kneel adown
 Before the vine-wreath crown !
 I saw parch’d Abyssinia rouse and sing
 To the silver cymbals’ ring !
 I saw the whelming vintage hotly pierce
 Old Tartary the fierce !
 The kings of Inde their jewel-sceptres vail,
 And from their treasures scatter pearled hail ;
 Great Brahma from his mystic heaven groans,
 And all his priesthood moans ;
 Before young Bacchus’ eye-wink turning pale.—
 Into these regions came I following him,
 Sick hearted, weary—so I took a whim
 To stray away into these forests drear
 Alone, without a peer :
 And I have told thee all thou mayest hear.

‘ Young stranger !
 I’ve been a ranger
 In search of pleasure throughout every clime :
 Alas, ’tis not for me !
 Bewitch’d I sure must be,
 To lose in grieving all my maiden prime.

‘ Come then, Sorrow !
 Sweetest Sorrow !
 Like an own babe I nurse thee on my breast :
 I thought to leave thee
 And deceive thee,
 But now of all the world I love thee best.

‘ There is not one,
 No, no, not one
 But thee to comfort a poor lonely maid ;
 Thou art her mother,
 And her brother,
 Her playmate, and her wooer in the shade.’

260

270

280

290

LAMIA,
ISABELLA,
THE EVE OF ST. AGNES
AND
OTHER POEMS.

BY JOHN KEATS,
AUTHOR OF ENDYMION.

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L A M I A

PART I

UPON a time, before the faery broods
 Drove Nymph and Satyr from the prosperous woods,
 Before King Oberon's bright diadem,
 Sceptre, and mantle, clasp'd with dewy gem,
 Frighted away the Dryads and the Fauns
 From rushes green, and brakes, and cowslip'd lawns,
 The ever-smitten Hermes empty left
 His golden throne, bent warm on amorous theft :
 From high Olympus had he stolen light,
 On this side of Jove's clouds, to escape the sight
 Of his great summoner, and made retreat
 Into a forest on the shores of Crete.

10

For somewhere in that sacred island dwelt
 A nymph, to whom all hoofed Satyrs knelt ;
 At whose white feet the languid Tritons poured
 Pearls, while on land they wither'd and adored.

Fast by the springs where she to bathe was wont,
 And in those meads where sometime she might haunt,
 Were strewn rich gifts, unknown to any Muse,
 Though Fancy's casket were unlock'd to choose.

20

Ah, what a world of love was at her feet !

So Hermes thought, and a celestial heat
 Burnt from his winged heels to either ear,
 That from a whiteness, as the lilly clear,
 Blush'd into roses 'mid his golden hair,
 Fallen in jealous curls about his shoulders bare.

From vale to vale, from wood to wood, he flew,
 Breathing upon the flowers his passion new,
 And wound with many a river to its head,

29

To find where this sweet nymph prepar'd her secret bed :
 In vain ; the sweet nymph might nowhere be found,
 And so he rested, on the lonely ground,

Pensive, and full of painful jealousies
 Of the Wood-Gods, and even the very trees.
 There as he stood, he heard a mournful voice,
 Such as once heard, in gentle heart, destroys
 All pain but pity : thus the lone voice spake :
 ' When from this wreathed tomb shall I awake !'
 ' When move in a sweet body fit for life,
 ' And love, and pleasure, and the ruddy strife 40
 ' Of hearts and lips ! Ah, miserable me !'
 The God, dove-footed, glided silently
 Round bush and tree, soft-brushing, in his speed,
 The taller grasses and full-flowering weed,
 Until he found a palpitating snake,
 Bright, and cirque-couchant in a dusky brake.

She was a gordian shape of dazzling hue,
 Vermilion-spotted, golden, green, and blue ;
 Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard,
 Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson barr'd ; 50
 And full of silver moons, that, as she breathed,
 Dissolv'd, or brighter shone, or interwreathed
 Their lustres with the gloomier tapestries—
 So rainbow-sided, touch'd with miseries,
 She seem'd, at once, some penanced lady elf,
 Some demon's mistress, or the demon's self.
 Upon her crest she wore a wannish fire
 Sprinkled with stars, like Ariadne's tiar :
 Her head was serpent, but, ah, bitter-sweet ! 59
 She had a woman's mouth with all its pearls complete :
 And for her eyes : what could such eyes do there
 But weep, and weep, that they were born so fair ?
 As Proserpine still weeps for her Sicilian air.
 Her throat was serpent, but the words she spake
 Came, as through bubbling honey, for Love's sake,
 And thus ; while Hermes on his pinions lay,
 Like a stoop'd falcon ere he takes his prey.

- ' Fair Hermes, crown'd with feathers, fluttering light,
 ' I had a splendid dream of thee last night :
 ' I saw thee sitting, on a throne of gold, 70
 ' Among the Gods, upon Olympus old,
 ' The only sad one ; for thou didst not hear
 ' The soft, lute-finger'd Muses chaunting clear,
 ' Nor even Apollo when he sang alone,
 ' Deaf to his throbbing throat's long, long melodious moan.
 ' I dreamt I saw thee, robed in purple flakes,
 ' Break amorous through the clouds, as morning breaks,
 ' And, swiftly as a bright Phœbean dart,
 ' Strike for the Cretan isle ; and here thou art !
 ' Too gentle Hermes, hast thou found the maid ? ' 80
 Whereat the star of Lethe not delay'd
 His rosy eloquence, and thus inquired :
 ' Thou smooth-lipp'd serpent, surely high inspired !
 ' Thou beauteous wreath, with melancholy eyes,
 ' Possess whatever bliss thou canst devise,
 ' Telling me only where my nymph is fled,—
 ' Where she doth breathe ! ' ' Bright planet, thou hast
 said,'
 Return'd the snake, ' but seal with oaths, fair God ! '
 ' I swear,' said Hermes, ' by my serpent rod,
 ' And by thine eyes, and by thy starry crown ! ' 90
 Light flew his earnest words, among the blossoms blown.
 Then thus again the brilliance feminine :
 ' Too frail of heart ! for this lost nymph of thine,
 ' Free as the air, invisibly, she strays
 ' About these thornless wilds ; her pleasant days
 ' She tastes unseen ; unseen her nimble feet
 ' Leave traces in the grass and flowers sweet ;
 ' From weary tendrils, and bow'd branches green,
 ' She plucks the fruit unseen, she bathes unseen :
 ' And by my power is her beauty veil'd
 ' To keep it unaffronted, unassail'd 100

' By the love-glances of unlovely eyes,
 ' Of Satyrs, Fauns, and blear'd Silenus' sighs.
 ' Pale grew her immortality, for woe
 ' Of all these lovers, and she grieved so
 ' I took compassion on her, bade her steep
 ' Her hair in weird syrups, that would keep
 ' Her loveliness invisible, yet free
 ' To wander as she loves, in liberty.
 ' Thou shalt behold her, Hermes, thou alone, 110
 ' If thou wilt, as thou swearest, grant my boon !'
 Then, once again, the charmed God began
 An oath, and through the serpent's ears it ran
 Warm, tremulous, devout, psalterian.
 Ravish'd, she lifted her Circean head,
 Blush'd a live damask, and swift-lisping said,
 ' I was a woman, let me have once more
 ' A woman's shape, and charming as before.
 ' I love a youth of Corinth—O the bliss !
 ' Give me my woman's form, and place me where 120
 he is.
 ' Stoop, Hermes, let me breathe upon thy brow,
 ' And thou shalt see thy sweet nymph even now.'
 The God on half-shut feathers sank serene,
 She breath'd upon his eyes, and swift was seen
 Of both the guarded nymph near-smiling on the green.
 It was no dream ; or say a dream it was,
 Real are the dreams of Gods, and smoothly pass
 Their pleasures in a long immortal dream.
 One warm, flush'd moment, hovering, it might seem
 Dash'd by the wood-nymph's beauty, so he burn'd ;
 Then, lighting on the printless verdure, turn'd 131
 To the swoon'd serpent, and with languid arm,
 Delicate, put to proof the lythe Caducean charm.
 So done, upon the nymph his eyes he bent
 Full of adoring tears and blandishment,

And towards her stept : she, like a moon in wane,
 Faded before him, cower'd, nor could restrain
 Her fearful sobs, self-folding like a flower
 That faints into itself at evening hour :
 But the God fostering her chilled hand,
 She felt the warmth, her eyelids open'd bland,
 And, like new flowers at morning song of bees,
 Bloom'd, and gave up her honey to the lees.
 Into the green-recessed woods they flew ;
 Nor grew they pale, as mortal lovers do.

140

Left to herself, the serpent now began
 To change ; her elfin blood in madness ran,
 Her mouth foam'd, and the grass, therewith besprent,
 Wither'd at dew so sweet and virulent ;
 Her eyes in torture fix'd, and anguish drear,
 Hot, glaz'd, and wide, with lid-lashes all sear,
 Flash'd phosphor and sharp sparks, without one cooling
 tear.

150

The colours all inflam'd throughout her train,
 She writh'd about, convuls'd with scarlet pain :
 A deep volcanian yellow took the place
 Of all her milder-mooned body's grace :
 And, as the lava ravishes the mead,
 Spoilt all her silver mail, and golden brede ;
 Made gloom of all her frecklings, streaks and bars,
 Eclips'd her crescents, and lick'd up her stars :
 So that, in moments few, she was undrest
 Of all her sapphires, greens, and amethyst,
 And rubious-argent : of all these bereft,
 Nothing but pain and ugliness were left.
 Still shone her crown ; that vanish'd, also she
 Melted and disappear'd as suddenly ;
 And in the air, her new voice luting soft,
 Cried, ' Lycius ! gentle Lycius ! '—Borne aloft

160

With the bright mists about the mountains hoar
 These words dissolv'd : Crete's forests heard no more.

Whither fled Lamia, now a lady bright, 171
 A full-born beauty new and exquisite ?
 She fled into that valley they pass o'er
 Who go to Corinth from Cenchreas' shore ;
 And rested at the foot of those wild hills,
 The rugged founts of the Peræan rills,
 And of that other ridge whose barren back
 Stretches, with all its mist and cloudy rack,
 South-westward to Cleone. There she stood
 About a young bird's flutter from a wood, 180
 Fair, on a sloping green of mossy tread,
 By a clear pool, wherein she passioned
 To see herself escap'd from so sore ills,
 While her robes flaunted with the daffodils.

Ah, happy Lycius !—for she was a maid
 More beautiful than ever twisted braid,
 Or sigh'd, or blush'd, or on spring-flowered lea
 Spread a green kirtle to the minstrelsy :
 A virgin purest lipp'd, yet in the lore
 Of love deep learned to the red heart's core : 190
 Not one hour old, yet of sciential brain
 To unperplex bliss from its neighbour pain ;
 Define their pettish limits, and estrange
 Their points of contact, and swift counterchange ;
 Intrigue with the specious chaos, and dispart
 Its most ambiguous atoms with sure art ;
 As though in Cupid's college she had spent
 Sweet days a lovely graduate, still unshent,
 And kept his rosy terms in idle languishment.

Why this fair creature chose so faerily
 By the wayside to linger, we shall see ; 200

But first 'tis fit to tell how she could muse
 And dream, when in the serpent prison-house,
 Of all she list, strange or magnificent :
 How, ever, where she will'd, her spirit went ;
 Whether to faint Elysium, or where
 Down through tress-lifting waves the Nereids fair
 Wind into Thetis' bower by many a pearly stair ;
 Or where God Bacchus drains his cups divine,
 Stretch'd out, at ease, beneath a glutinous pine ;
 Or where in Pluto's gardens palatine
 Mulciber's columns gleam in far piazzian line.
 And sometimes into cities she would send
 Her dream, with feast and rioting to blend ;
 And once, while among mortals dreaming thus,
 She saw the young Corinthian Lycius
 Charioting foremost in the envious race,
 Like a young Jove with calm uneager face,
 And fell into a swooning love of him.

Now on the moth-time of that evening dim
 He would return that way, as well she knew,
 To Corinth from the shore ; for freshly blew
 The eastern soft wind, and his galley now
 Grated the quaystones with her brazen prow
 In port Cenchreas, from Egina isle
 Fresh anchor'd ; whither he had been awhile
 To sacrifice to Jove, whose temple there
 Waits with high marble doors for blood and incense rare.
 Jove heard his vows, and better'd his desire ;
 For by some freakful chance he made retire
 From his companions, and set forth to walk,
 Perhaps grown wearied of their Corinth talk :
 Over the solitary hills he fared,
 Thoughtless at first, but ere eve's star appeared
 His phantasy was lost, where reason fades,
 In the calm'd twilight of Platonic shades.

210

220

230

Lamia beheld him coming, near, more near—
 Close to her passing, in indifference drear,
 His silent sandals swept the mossy green ;
 So neighbour'd to him, and yet so unseen 240
 She stood : he pass'd, shut up in mysteries,
 His mind wrapp'd like his mantle, while her eyes
 Follow'd his steps, and her neck regal white
 Turn'd—syllabling thus, ' Ah, Lycius bright,
 ' And will you leave me on the hills alone ?
 ' Lycius, look back ! and be some pity shown.'
 He did ; not with cold wonder fearingly,
 But Orpheus-like at an Eurydice ;
 For so delicious were the words she sung,
 It seem'd he had lov'd them a whole summer long : 250
 And soon his eyes had drunk her beauty up,
 Leaving no drop in the bewildering cup,
 And still the cup was full,—while he, afraid
 Lest she should vanish ere his lip had paid
 Due adoration, thus began to adore ;
 Her soft look growing coy, she saw his chain so
 sure :
 ' Leave thee alone ! Look back ! Ah, Goddess, see
 ' Whether my eyes can ever turn from thee !
 ' For pity do not this sad heart belie—
 ' Even as thou vanishest so shall I die. 260
 ' Stay ! though a Naiad of the rivers, stay !
 ' To thy far wishes will thy streams obey :
 ' Stay ! though the greenest woods be thy domain,
 ' Alone they can drink up the morning rain :
 ' Though a descended Pleiad, will not one
 ' Of thine harmonious sisters keep in tune
 ' Thy spheres, and as thy silver proxy shine ?
 ' So sweetly to these ravish'd ears of mine
 ' Came thy sweet greeting, that if thou shouldst fade
 ' Thy memory will waste me to a shade :— 270

- ‘ For pity do not melt ! ’—‘ If I should stay,’
 Said Lamia, ‘ here, upon this floor of clay,
 ‘ And pain my steps upon these flowers too rough,
 ‘ What canst thou say or do of charm enough
 ‘ To dull the nice remembrance of my home ?
 ‘ Thou canst not ask me with thee here to roam
 ‘ Over these hills and vales, where no joy is,—
 ‘ Empty of immortality and bliss !
 ‘ Thou art a scholar, Lycius, and must know
 ‘ That finer spirits cannot breathe below 280
 ‘ In human climes, and live : Alas ! poor youth,
 ‘ What taste of purer air hast thou to soothe
 ‘ My essence ? What serener palaces,
 ‘ Where I may all my many senses please,
 ‘ And by mysterious sleights a hundred thirsts appease ?
 ‘ It cannot be—Adieu ! ’ So said, she rose
 Tiptoe with white arms spread. He, sick to lose
 The amorous promise of her lone complain,
 Swoon’d, murmuring of love, and pale with pain.
 The cruel lady, without any show 290
 Of sorrow for her tender favourite’s woe,
 But rather, if her eyes could brighter be,
 With brighter eyes and slow amenity,
 Put her new lips to his, and gave afresh
 The life she had so tangled in her mesh :
 And as he from one trance was wakening
 Into another, she began to sing,
 Happy in beauty, life, and love, and every thing,
 A song of love, too sweet for earthly lyres,
 While, like held breath, the stars drew in their panting
 fires. 300
 And then she whisper’d in such trembling tone,
 As those who, safe together met alone
 For the first time through many anguish’d days,
 Use other speech than looks ; bidding him raise

His drooping head, and clear his soul of doubt,
 For that she was a woman, and without
 Any more subtle fluid in her veins
 Than throbbing blood, and that the self-same pains
 Inhabited her frail-strung heart as his.

And next she wonder'd how his eyes could miss 310
 Her face so long in Corinth, where, she said,
 She dwelt but half retir'd, and there had led
 Days happy as the gold coin could invent
 Without the aid of love ; yet in content
 Till she saw him, as once she pass'd him by,
 Where 'gainst a column he leant thoughtfully
 At Venus' temple porch, 'mid baskets heap'd
 Of amorous herbs and flowers, newly reap'd
 Late on that eve, as 'twas the night before
 The Adonian feast ; whereof she saw no more, 320
 But wept alone those days, for why should she adore ?
 Lycius from death awoke into amaze,
 To see her still, and singing so sweet lays ;
 Then from amaze into delight he fell
 To hear her whisper woman's lore so well ;
 And every word she spake entic'd him on
 To unperplex'd delight and pleasure known.
 Let the mad poets say whate'er they please
 Of the sweets of Faeries, Peris, Goddesses,
 There is not such a treat among them all, 330
 Haunters of cavern, lake, and waterfall,
 As a real woman, lineal indeed
 From Pyrrha's pebbles or old Adam's seed.
 Thus gentle Lamia judg'd, and judg'd aright,
 That Lycius could not love in half a fright,
 So threw the goddess off, and won his heart
 More pleasantly by playing woman's part,
 With no more awe than what her beauty gave,
 That, while it smote, still guaranteed to save.

Lycius to all made eloquent reply,
 Marrying to every word a twinborn sigh ;
 And last, pointing to Corinth, ask'd her sweet,
 If 'twas too far that night for her soft feet.
 The way was short, for Lamia's eagerness
 Made, by a spell, the triple league decrease
 To a few paces ; not at all surmised
 By blinded Lycius, so in her comprised.
 They pass'd the city gates, he knew not how,
 So noiseless, and he never thought to know.

As men talk in a dream, so Corinth all,
 Throughout her palaces imperial,
 And all her populous streets and temples lewd,
 Mutter'd, like tempest in the distance brew'd,
 To the wide-spreaded night above her towers.
 Men, women, rich and poor, in the cool hours,
 Shuffled their sandals o'er the pavement white,
 Companion'd or alone ; while many a light
 Flared, here and there, from wealthy festivals,
 And threw their moving shadows on the walls,
 Or found them cluster'd in the corniced shade
 Of some arch'd temple door, or dusky colonnade.

Muffling his face, of greeting friends in fear,
 Her fingers he press'd hard, as one came near
 With curl'd gray beard, sharp eyes, and smooth bald crown,
 Slow-stepp'd, and robed in philosophic gown :
 Lycius shrank closer, as they met and past,
 Into his mantle, adding wings to haste,
 While hurried Lamia trembled : 'Ah,' said he,
 'Why do you shudder, love, so ruefully ?
 'Why does your tender palm dissolve in dew ?'—
 'I'm wearied,' said fair Lamia : 'tell me who
 'Is that old man ? I cannot bring to mind
 'His features :—Lycius ! wherefore did you blind

' Yourself from his quick eyes ? ' Lycius replied,
 ' 'Tis Apollonius sage, my trusty guide
 ' And good instructor ; but to-night he seems
 ' The ghost of folly haunting my sweet dreams.'

While yet he spake they had arrived before
 A pillar'd porch, with lofty portal door,
 Where hung a silver lamp, whose phosphor glow 380
 Reflected in the slabbed steps below,
 Mild as a star in water ; for so new,
 And so unsullied was the marble's hue,
 So through the crystal polish, liquid fine,
 Ran the dark veins, that none but feet divine
 Could e'er have touch'd there. Sounds Æolian
 Breath'd from the hinges, as the ample span
 Of the wide doors disclos'd a place unknown
 Some time to any, but those two alone,
 And a few Persian mutes, who that same year 390
 Were seen about the markets : none knew where
 They could inhabit ; the most curious
 Were foil'd, who watch'd to trace them to their house
 And but the flitter-winged verse must tell,
 For truth's sake, what woe afterwards befel,
 'Twould humour many a heart to leave them thus
 Shut from the busy world of more incredulous.

PART II

LOVE in a hut, with water and a crust,
 Is—Love, forgive us !—cinders, ashes, dust :
 Love in a palace is perhaps at last
 More grievous torment than a hermit's fast :—
 That is a doubtful tale from faery land,
 Hard for the non-elect to understand.
 Had Lycius liv'd to hand his story down,
 He might have given the moral a fresh frown,

Or clench'd it quite : but too short was their bliss
 To breed distrust and hate, that make the soft voice
 hiss. 10

Besides, there, nightly, with terrific glare,
 Love, jealous grown of so complete a pair,
 Hover'd and buzz'd his wings, with fearful roar,
 Above the lintel of their chamber door,
 And down the passage cast a glow upon the floor.

For all this came a ruin : side by side
 They were enthroned, in the even tide,
 Upon a couch, near to a curtaining
 Whose airy texture, from a golden string,
 Fleated into the room, and let appear 20
 Unveil'd the summer heaven, blue and clear,
 Betwixt two marble shafts :—there they reposed,
 Where use had made it sweet, with eyelids closed,
 Saving a tythe which love still open kept,
 That they might see each other while they almost
 slept ;

When from the slope side of a suburb hill,
 Deafening the swallow's twitter, came a thrill
 Of trumpets—Lycius started—the sounds fled,
 But left a thought, a buzzing in his head.

For the first time, since first he harbour'd in 30
 That purple-lined palace of sweet sin,
 His spirit pass'd beyond its golden bourn
 Into the noisy world almost forsworn.

The lady, ever watchful, penetrant,
 Saw this with pain, so arguing a want
 Of something more, more than her empery
 Of joys ; and she began to moan and sigh
 Because he mused beyond her, knowing well
 That but a moment's thought is passion's passing bell.
 ' Why do you sigh, fair creature ? ' whisper'd he : 40
 ' Why do you think ? ' return'd she tenderly :

' You have deserted me ;—where am I now ?
 ' Not in your heart while care weighs on your brow :
 ' No, no, you have dismiss'd me ; and I go
 ' From your breast houseless : ay, it must be so.'
 He answer'd, bending to her open eyes,
 Where he was mirror'd small in paradise,
 ' My silver planet, both of eve and morn !
 ' Why will you plead yourself so sad forlorn,
 ' While I am striving how to fill my heart
 ' With deeper crimson, and a double smart ?
 ' How to entangle, trammel up and snare
 ' Your soul in mind, and labyrinth you there
 ' Like the hid scent in an unbudded rose ?
 ' Ay, a sweet kiss—you see your mighty woes.
 ' My thoughts ! shall I unveil them ? Listen then !
 ' What mortal hath a prize, that other men
 ' May be confounded and abash'd withal,
 ' But lets it sometimes pace abroad majestical,
 ' And triumph, as in thee I should rejoice
 ' Amid the hoarse alarm of Corinth's voice.
 ' Let my foes choke, and my friends shout afar,
 ' While through the thronged streets your bridal car
 ' Wheels round its dazzling spokes.'—The lady's cheek
 Trembled ; she nothing said, but, pale and meek,
 Arose and knelt before him, wept a rain
 Of sorrows at his words ; at last with pain
 Beseeching him, the while his hand she wrung,
 To change his purpose. He thereat was stung,
 Perverse, with stronger fancy to reclaim
 Her wild and timid nature to his aim :
 Besides, for all his love, in self despite,
 Against his better self, he took delight
 Luxurious in her sorrows, soft and new.
 His passion, cruel grown, took on a hue
 Fierce and sanguineous as 'twas possible
 In one whose brow had no dark veins to swell.

Fine was the mitigated fury, like
 Apollo's presence when in act to strike
 The serpent—Ha, the serpent ! certes, she 80
 Was none. She burnt, she lov'd the tyranny,
 And, all subdued, consented to the hour
 When to the bridal he should lead his paramour.
 Whispering in midnight silence, said the youth,
 ' Sure some sweet name thou hast, though, by my truth,
 ' I have not ask'd it, ever thinking thee
 ' Not mortal, but of heavenly progeny,
 ' As still I do. Hast any mortal name,
 ' Fit appellation for this dazzling frame ?
 ' Or friends or kinsfolk on the citied earth,
 ' To share our marriage feast and nuptial mirth ?' 90
 ' I have no friends,' said Lamia, ' no, not one ;
 ' My presence in wide Corinth hardly known :
 ' My parents' bones are in their dusty urns
 ' Sepulchred, where no kindled incense burns,
 ' Seeing all their luckless race are dead, save me,
 ' And I neglect the holy rite for thee.
 ' Even as you list invite your many guests ;
 ' But if, as now it seems, your vision rests
 ' With any pleasure on me, do not bid 100
 ' Old Apollonius—from him keep me hid.'
 Lycius, perplex'd at words so blind and blank,
 Made close inquiry ; from whose touch she shrank,
 Feigning a sleep ; and he to the dull shade
 Of deep sleep in a moment was betray'd.

It was the custom then to bring away
 The bride from home at blushing shut of day,
 Veil'd, in a chariot, heralded along
 By strewn flowers, torches, and a marriage song,
 With other pageants : but this fair unknown 110
 Had not a friend. So being left alone,

(Lycius was gone to summon all his kin)
 And knowing surely she could never win
 His foolish heart from its mad pompousness,
 She set herself, high-thoughted, how to dress
 The misery in fit magnificence.
 She did so, but 'tis doubtful how and whence
 Came, and who were her subtle servitors.
 About the halls, and to and from the doors,
 There was a noise of wings, till in short space 120
 The glowing banquet-room shone with wide-arched grace.
 A haunting music, sole perhaps and lone
 Supportress of the faery-roof, made moan
 Throughout, as fearful the whole charm might fade.
 Fresh carved cedar, mimicking a glade
 Of palm and plantain, met from either side,
 High in the midst, in honour of the bride :
 Two palms and then two plantains, and so on,
 From either side their stems branch'd one to one
 All down the aisled place ; and beneath all 130
 There ran a stream of lamps straight on from wall to
 wall.
 So canopied, lay an untasted feast
 Teeming with odours. Lamia, regal drest,
 Silently paced about, and as she went,
 In pale contented sort of discontent,
 Mission'd her viewless servants to enrich
 The fretted splendour of each nook and niche.
 Between the tree-stems, marbled plain at first,
 Came jasper pannels ; then, anon, there burst
 Forth creeping imagery of slighter trees,
 And with the larger wove in small intricacies. 140
 Approving all, she faded at self-will,
 And shut the chamber up, close, hush'd and still,
 Complete and ready for the revels rude,
 When dreadful guests would come to spoil her solitude

The day appear'd, and all the gossip rout.
 O senseless Lycius ! Madman ! wherefore flout
 The silent-blessing fate, warm cloister'd hours,
 And show to common eyes these secret bowers ?
 The herd approach'd ; each guest, with busy brain, 150
 Arriving at the portal, gaz'd amain,
 And enter'd marveling : for they knew the street,
 Remember'd it from childhood all complete
 Without a gap, yet ne'er before had seen
 That royal porch, that high-built fair demesne ;
 So in they hurried all, maz'd, curious and keen :
 Save one, who look'd thereon with eye severe,
 And with calm-planted steps walk'd in austere ;
 'Twas Apollonius : something too he laugh'd,
 As though some knotty problem, that had daft 160
 His patient thought, had now begun to thaw,
 And solve and melt :—'twas just as he foresaw.

He met within the murmurous vestibule
 His young disciple. ' 'Tis no common rule,
 ' Lycius,' said he, ' for uninvited guest
 ' To force himself upon you, and infest
 ' With an unbidden presence the bright throng
 ' Of younger friends ; yet must I do this wrong,
 ' And you forgive me.' Lycius blush'd, and led
 The old man through the inner doors broad-spread ; 170
 With reconciling words and courteous mien
 Turning into sweet milk the sophist's spleen.

Of wealthy lustre was the banquet-room,
 Fill'd with pervading brilliance and perfume :
 Before each lucid pannel fuming stood
 A censer fed with myrrh and spiced wood,
 Each by a sacred tripod held aloft,
 Whose slender feet wide-swerv'd upon the soft

Wool-woofed carpets: fifty wreaths of smoke
 From fifty censers their light voyage took
 To the high roof, still mimick'd as they rose
 Along the mirror'd walls by twin-clouds odorous.
 Twelve sphered tables, by silk seats insphered,
 High as the level of a man's breast rear'd
 On libbard's paws, upheld the heavy gold
 Of cups and goblets, and the store thrice told
 Of Ceres' horn, and, in huge vessels, wine
 Come from the gloomy tun with merry shine.
 Thus loaded with a feast the tables stood,
 Each shrining in the midst the image of a God.

180

When in an antichamber every guest
 Had felt the cold full sponge to pleasure press'd,
 By minist'ring slaves, upon his hands and feet,
 And fragrant oils with ceremony meet
 Pour'd on his hair, they all mov'd to the feast
 In white robes, and themselves in order placed
 Around the silken couches, wondering
 Whence all this mighty cost and blaze of wealth could
 spring.

Soft went the music the soft air along,
 While fluent Greek a vowel'd undersong
 Kept up among the guests, discoursing low
 At first, for scarcely was the wine at flow;
 But when the happy vintage touch'd their brains,
 Louder they talk, and louder come the strains
 Of powerful instruments:—the gorgeous dyes,
 The space, the splendour of the draperies,
 The roof of awful richness, nectarous cheer,
 Beautiful slaves, and Lamia's self, appear,
 Now, when the wine has done its rosy deed,
 And every soul from human trammels freed,

200

210

No more so strange ; for merry wine, sweet wine,
 Will make Elysian shades not too fair, too divine.
 Soon was God Bacchus at meridian height ;
 Flush'd were their cheeks, and bright eyes double bright :
 Garlands of every green, and every scent
 From vales deflower'd, or forest-trees branch-rent,
 In baskets of bright osier'd gold were brought
 High as the handles heap'd, to suit the thought
 Of every guest ; that each, as he did please,
 Might fancy-fit his brows, silk-pillow'd at his ease.

220

What wreath for Lamia ? What for Lycius ?
 What for the sage, old Apollonius ?
 Upon her aching forehead be there hung
 The leaves of willow and of adder's tongue ;
 And for the youth, quick, let us strip for him
 The thyrsus, that his watching eyes may swim
 Into forgetfulness ; and, for the sage,
 Let spear-grass and the spiteful thistle wage
 War on his temples. Do not all charms fly
 At the mere touch of cold philosophy ?
 There was an awful rainbow once in heaven :
 We know her woof, her texture ; she is given
 In the dull catalogue of common things.
 Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings,
 Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,
 Empty the haunted air, and gnomed mine—
 Unweave a rainbow, as it erewhile made
 The tender-person'd Lamia melt into a shade.

230

By her glad Lycius sitting, in chief place,
 Scarce saw in all the room another face,
 Till, checking his love trance, a cup he took
 Full brimm'd, and opposite sent forth a look
 'Cross the broad table, to beseech a glance
 From his old teacher's wrinkled countenance,

240

And pledge him. The bald-head philosopher
 Had fix'd his eye, without a twinkle or stir
 Full on the alarmed beauty of the bride,
 Brow-beating her fair form, and troubling her sweet pride.
 Lycius then press'd her hand, with devout touch,
 As pale it lay upon the rosy couch : 250

Twas icy, and the cold ran through his veins ;
 Then sudden it grew hot, and all the pains
 Of an unnatural heat shot to his heart.

' Lamia, what means this ? Wherefore dost thou start ?
 ' Know'st thou that man ? ' Poor Lamia answer'd
 not.

He gaz'd into her eyes, and not a jot
 Own'd they the lovelorn piteous appeal :
 More, more he gaz'd : his human senses reel :
 Some hungry spell that loveliness absorbs ;
 There was no recognition in those orbs. 260

' Lamia ! ' he cried—and no soft-toned reply.
 The many heard, and the loud revelry
 Grew hush ; the stately music no more breathes ;
 The myrtle sicken'd in a thousand wreaths.
 By faint degrees, voice, lute, and pleasure ceased ;
 A deadly silence step by step increased,
 Until it seem'd a horrid presence there,
 And not a man but felt the terror in his hair.

' Lamia ! ' he shriek'd ; and nothing but the shriek
 With its sad echo did the silence break. 270

' Begone, foul dream ! ' he cried, gazing again
 In the bride's face, where now no azure vein
 Wander'd on fair-spaced temples ; no soft bloom
 Misted the cheek ; no passion to illume
 The deep-recessed vision :—all was blight ;
 Lamia, no longer fair, there sat a deadly white.
 ' Shut, shut those juggling eyes, thou ruthless man !
 ' Turn them aside, wretch ! or the righteous ban

‘ Of all the Gods, whose dreadful images
 ‘ Here represent their shadowy presences,
 ‘ May pierce them on the sudden with the thorn
 ‘ Of painful blindness ; leaving thee forlorn,
 ‘ In trembling dotage to the feeblest fright
 ‘ Of conscience, for their long offended might,
 ‘ For all thine impious proud-heart sophistries,
 ‘ Unlawful magic, and enticing lies.

‘ Corinthians ! look upon that gray-beard wretch !

‘ Mark how, possess’d, his lashless eyelids stretch

‘ Around his demon eyes ! Corinthians, see !

‘ My sweet bride withers at their potency.’

‘ Fool ! ’ said the sophist, in an under-tone

Gruff with contempt ; which a death-nighing moan
 From Lycius answer’d, as heart-struck and lost,
 He sank supine beside the aching ghost.

‘ Fool ! Fool ! ’ repeated he, while his eyes still

Relented not, nor mov’d ; ‘ from every ill

‘ Of life have I preserv’d thee to this day,

‘ And shall I see thee made a serpent’s prey ? ’

Then Lamia breath’d death breath ; the sophist’s eye,

Like a sharp spear, went through her utterly,

Keen, cruel, perceant, stinging : she, as well

As her weak hand could any meaning tell,

Motion’d him to be silent ; vainly so,

He look’d and look’d again a level—No !

‘ A Serpent ! ’ echoed he ; no sooner said,

Than with a frightful scream she vanished :

And Lycius’ arms were empty of delight,

As were his limbs of life, from that same night.

On the high couch he lay !—his friends came round—

Supported him—no pulse, or breath they found,

And, in its marriage robe, the heavy body wound.

280

290

300

310

ISABELLA

OR

THE POT OF BASIL

I

FAIR Isabel, poor simple Isabel !

Lorenzo, a young palmer in Love's eye !

They could not in the self-same mansion dwell

Without some stir of heart, some malady ;

They could not sit at meals but feel how well

It soothed each to be the other by ;

They could not, sure, beneath the same roof sleep

But to each other dream, and nightly weep.

II

With every morn their love grew tenderer,

With every eve deeper and tenderer still ;

10

He might not in house, field, or garden stir,

But her full shape would all his seeing fill ;

And his continual voice was pleasanter

To her, than noise of trees or hidden rill ;

Her lute-string gave an echo of his name,

She spoilt her half-done broidery with the same.

III

He knew whose gentle hand was at the latch

Before the door had given her to his eyes ;

And from her chamber-window he would catch

Her beauty farther than the falcon spies ;

20

And constant as her vespers would he watch,

Because her face was turn'd to the same skies ;

And with sick longing all the night outwear,

To hear her morning-step upon the stair.

IV

A whole long month of May in this sad plight
 Made their cheeks paler by the break of June :
 ' To-morrow will I bow to my delight,
 ' To-morrow will I ask my lady's boon.'—
 ' O may I never see another night,
 ' Lorenzo, if thy lips breathe not love's tune.'— 30
 So spake they to their pillows ; but, alas,
 Honeyless days and days did he let pass ;

V

Until sweet Isabella's untouch'd cheek
 Fell sick within the rose's just domain,
 Fell thin as a young mother's, who doth seek
 By every lull to cool her infant's pain :
 ' How ill she is,' said he, ' I may not speak,
 ' And yet I will, and tell my love all plain ;
 ' If looks speak love-laws, I will drink her tears,
 ' And at the least 'twill startle off her cares.' 40

VI

So said he one fair morning, and all day
 His heart beat awfully against his side ;
 And to his heart he inwardly did pray
 For power to speak ; but still the ruddy tide
 Stifled his voice, and puls'd resolve away—
 Fever'd his high conceit of such a bride,
 Yet brought him to the meekness of a child :
 Alas ! when passion is both meek and wild !

VII

So once more he had wak'd and anguished
 A dreary night of love and misery,
 If Isabel's quick eye had not been wed
 To every symbol on his forehead high ; 50

She saw it waxing very pale and dead,
 And straight all flush'd ; so, lisped tenderly,
 'Lorenzo !'—here she ceas'd her timid quest,
 But in her tone and look he read the rest.

VIII

'O Isabella, I can half perceive
 'That I may speak my grief into thine ear ;
 'If thou didst ever any thing believe,
 'Believe how I love thee, believe how near
 'My soul is to its doom : I would not grieve
 'Thy hand by unwelcome pressing, would not fear
 'Thine eyes by gazing ; but I cannot live
 'Another night, and not my passion shrive.

60

IX

'Love ! thou art leading me from wintry cold,
 'Lady ! thou leadest me to summer clime,
 'And I must taste the blossoms that unfold
 'In its ripe warmth this gracious morning time.'
 So said, his erewhile timid lips grew bold,
 And poesied with hers in dewy rhyme :
 Great bliss was with them, and great happiness
 Grew, like a lusty flower in June's caress.

70

X

Parting they seem'd to tread upon the air,
 Twin roses by the zephyr blown apart
 Only to meet again more close, and share
 The inward fragrance of each other's heart.
 She, to her chamber gone, a ditty fair
 Sang, of delicious love and honey'd dart ;
 He with light steps went up a western hill,
 And bade the sun farewell, and joy'd his fill.

80

XI

All close they met again, before the dusk
 Had taken from the stars its pleasant veil,
 All close they met, all eves, before the dusk
 Had taken from the stars its pleasant veil,
 Close in a bower of hyacinth and musk,
 Unknown of any, free from whispering tale.
 Ah ! better had it been for ever so,
 Than idle ears should pleasure in their woe.

XII

Were they unhappy then ?—It cannot be—
 Too many tears for lovers have been shed,
 Too many sighs give we to them in fee,
 Too much of pity after they are dead,
 Too many doleful stories do we see,
 Whose matter in bright gold were best be read ;
 Except in such a page where Theseus' spouse
 Over the pathless waves towards him bows.

XIII

But, for the general award of love,
 The little sweet doth kill much bitterness ;
 Though Dido silent is in under-grove,
 And Isabella's was a great distress,
 Though young Lorenzo in warm Indian clove
 Was not embalm'd, this truth is not the less—
 Even bees, the little almsmen of spring-bowers,
 Know there is richest juice in poison-flowers.

XIV

With her two brothers this fair lady dwelt,
 Enriched from ancestral merchandize,
 And for them many a weary hand did swell
 In torched mines and noisy factories,

And many once proud-quiver'd loins did melt

In blood from stinging whip ;—with hollow eyes 110
 Many all day in dazzling river stood,
 To take the rich-ored driftings of the flood.

xv

For them the Ceylon diver held his breath,

And went all naked to the hungry shark ;

For them his ears gush'd blood ; for them in death

The seal on the cold ice with piteous bark

Lay full of darts ; for them alone did seethe

A thousand men in troubles wide and dark :

Half-ignorant, they turn'd an easy wheel,

That set sharp racks at work, to pinch and peel. 120

xvi

Why were they proud ? Because their marble founts

Gush'd with more pride than do a wretch's tears ?—

Why were they proud ? Because fair orange-mounts

Were of more soft ascent than lazarus stairs ?—

Why were they proud ? Because red-lin'd accounts

Were richer than the songs of Grecian years ?—

Why were they proud ? again we ask aloud,

Why in the name of glory were they proud ?

xvii

Yet were these Florentines as self-retired

In hungry pride and gainful cowardice,

130

As two close Hebrews in that land inspired,

Paled in and vineyarded from beggar-spies ;

The hawks of ship-mast forests—the untired

And pannier'd mules for ducats and old lies—

Quick cat's-paws on the generous stray-away,—

Great wits in Spanish, Tuscan, and Malay.

XVIII

How was it these same ledger-men could spy
Fair Isabella in her downy nest ?

How could they find out in Lorenzo's eye
A straying from his toil ? Hot Egypt's pest
Into their vision covetous and sly !

How could these money-bags see east and west ?—
Yet so they did—and every dealer fair
Must see behind, as doth the hunted hare.

140

XIX

O eloquent and famed Boccaccio !

Of thee we now should ask forgiving boon,
And of thy spicy myrtles as they blow,
And of thy roses amorous of the moon,
And of thy lillies, that do paler grow

Now they can no more hear thy ghittern's tune, 150
For venturing syllables that ill beseem
The quiet glooms of such a piteous theme.

150

XX

Grant thou a pardon here, and then the tale

Shall move on soberly, as it is meet ;

There is no other crime, no mad assail

To make old prose in modern rhyme more sweet :
But it is done—succeed the verse or fail—

To honour thee, and thy gone spirit greet ;
To stead thee as a verse in English tongue,
An echo of thee in the north-wind sung.

160

XXI

These brethren having found by many signs

What love Lorenzo for their sister had,

And how she lov'd him too, each unconfines
His bitter thoughts to other, well nigh mad

160

That he, the servant of their trade designs,
 Should in their sister's love be blithe and glad,
 When 'twas their plan to coax her by degrees
 To some high noble and his olive-trees.

XXII

And many a jealous conference had they,
 And many times they bit their lips alone, 170
 Before they fix'd upon a surest way
 To make the youngster for his crime atone ;
 And at the last, these men of cruel clay
 Cut Mercy with a sharp knife to the bone
 For they resolved in some forest dim
 To kill Lorenzo, and there bury him.

XXIII

So on a pleasant morning, as he leant
 Into the sun-rise, o'er the balustrade
 Of the garden-terrace, towards him they bent
 Their footing through the dews ; and to him said, 180
 ' You seem there in the quiet of content,
 ' Lorenzo, and we are most loth to invade
 ' Calm speculation ; but if you are wise,
 ' Bestride your steed while cold is in the skies.

XXIV

' To-day we purpose, ay, this hour we mount
 ' To spur three leagues towards the Apennine ;
 ' Come down, we pray thee, ere the hot sun count
 ' His dewy rosary on the eglantine.'
 Lorenzo, courteously as he was wont,
 Bow'd a fair greeting to these serpents' whine ; 190
 And went in haste, to get in readiness,
 With belt, and spur, and bracing huntsman's dress.

XXV

And as he to the court-yard pass'd along,
 Each third step did he pause, and listen'd oft
 If he could hear his lady's matin-song,
 Or the light whisper of her footstep soft ;
 And as he thus over his passion hung,
 He heard a laugh full musical aloft ;
 When, looking up, he saw her features bright
 Smile through an in-door lattice, all delight.

200

‘ Love, Isabel ! ’ said he, ‘ I was in pain
 ‘ Lest I should miss to bid thee a good Morrow :
 ‘ Ah ! what if I should lose thee, when so fain
 ‘ I am to stifle all the heavy sorrow
 ‘ Of a poor three hours’ absence ? but we’ll gain
 ‘ Out of the amorous dark what day doth borrow.
 ‘ Good-bye ! I’ll soon be back.’—‘ Good bye ! ’ said she :—
 And as he went she chanted merrily.

XXVII

So the two brothers and their murder’d man
 Rode past fair Florence, to where Arno’s stream 210
 Gurgles through straiten’d banks, and still doth fan
 Itself with dancing bulrush, and the bream
 Keeps head against the freshets. Sick and wan
 The brothers’ faces in the ford did seem,
 Lorenzo’s flush with love.—They pass’d the water
 Into a forest quiet for the slaughter.

XXVIII

There was Lorenzo slain and buried in,
 There in that forest did his great love cease ;
 Ah ! when a soul doth thus its freedom win,
 It aches in loneliness—is ill at peace

220

As the break-covert blood-hounds of such sin :

They dipp'd their swords in the water, and did tease
Their horses homeward, with convulsed spur,
Each richer by his being a murderer.

XXIX

They told their sister how, with sudden speed,

Lorenzo had ta'en ship for foreign lands,

Because of some great urgency and need

In their affairs, requiring trusty hands.

Poor Girl ! put on thy stifling widow's weed,

And 'scape at once from Hope's accursed bands ; 230

To-day thou wilt not see him, nor to-morrow,

And the next day will be a day of sorrow.

XXX

She weeps alone for pleasures not to be ;

Sorely she wept until the night came on,

And then, instead of love, O misery !

She brooded o'er the luxury alone :

His image in the dusk she seem'd to see,

And to the silence made a gentle moan,

Spreading her perfect arms upon the air,

239

And on her couch low murmuring ' Where ? O where ? '

XXXI

But Selfishness, Love's cousin, held not long

Its fiery vigil in her single breast ;

She fretted for the golden hour, and hung

Upon the time with feverish unrest—

Not long—for soon into her heart a throng

Of higher occupants, a richer zest,

Came tragic ; passion not to be subdued,

And sorrow for her love in travels rude.

XXXII

In the mid days of autumn, on their eves
 The breath of Winter comes from far away,
 And the sick west continually bereaves
 Of some gold tinge, and plays a roundelay
 Of death among the bushes and the leaves,
 To make all bare before he dares to stray
 From his north cavern. So sweet Isabel
 By gradual decay from beauty fell,

250

XXXIII

Because Lorenzo came not. Oftentimes
 She ask'd her brothers, with an eye all pale,
 Striving to be itself, what dungeon climes
 Could keep him off so long ? They spake a tale
 Time after time, to quiet her. Their crimes
 Came on them, like a smoke from Hinnom's vale ;
 And every night in dreams they groan'd aloud,
 To see their sister in her snowy shroud.

260

XXXIV

And she had died in drowsy ignorance,
 But for a thing more deadly dark than all ;
 It came like a fierce potion, drunk by chance,
 Which saves a sick man from the feather'd pall
 For some few gasping moments ; like a lance,
 Waking an Indian from his cloudy hall
 With cruel pierce, and bringing him again
 Sense of the gnawing fire at heart and brain.

270

XXXV

It was a vision.—In the drowsy gloom,
 The dull of midnight, at her couch's foot
 Lorenzo stood, and wept : the forest tomb
 Had marr'd his glossy hair which once could shoot

Lustre into the sun, and put cold doom
 Upon his lips, and taken the soft lute
 From his lorn voice, and past his loamed ears
 Had made a miry channel for his tears.

280

XXXVI

Strange sound it was, when the pale shadow spake ;
 For there was striving, in its piteous tongue,
 To speak as when on earth it was awake,
 And Isabella on its music hung :
 Languor there was in it, and tremulous shake,
 As in a palsied Druid's harp unstrung ;
 And through it moan'd a ghostly under-song,
 Like hoarse night-gusts sepulchral briars among.

XXXVII

Its eyes, though wild, were still all dewy bright
 With love, and kept all phantom fear aloof
 From the poor girl by magic of their light,
 The while it did unthread the horrid woof
 Of the late darken'd time,—the murderous spite
 Of pride and avarice,—the dark pine roof
 In the forest,—and the sodden turfed dell,
 Where, without any word, from stabs he fell.

290

XXXVIII

Saying moreover, ' Isabel, my sweet !
 ' Red whortle-berries droop above my head,
 ' And a large flint-stone weighs upon my feet ;
 ' Around me beeches and high chestnuts shed
 ' Their leaves and prickly nuts ; a sheep-fold bleat
 ' Comes from beyond the river to my bed :
 ' Go, shed one tear upon my heather-bloom,
 ' And it shall comfort me within the tomb.

300

XXXIX

‘ I am a shadow now, alas ! alas !
 ‘ Upon the skirts of human-nature dwelling
 ‘ Alone : I chant alone the holy mass,
 ‘ While little sounds of life are round me knelling,
 ‘ And glossy bees at noon do fieldward pass,
 ‘ And many a chapel bell the hour is telling, 310
 ‘ Paining me through : those sounds grow strange to me,
 ‘ And thou art distant in Humanity.

XL

‘ I know what was, I feel full well what is,
 ‘ And I should rage, if spirits could go mad :
 ‘ Though I forget the taste of earthly bliss,
 ‘ That paleness warms my grave, as though I had
 ‘ A Seraph chosen from the bright abyss
 ‘ To be my spouse : thy paleness makes me glad ;
 ‘ Thy beauty grows upon me, and I feel
 ‘ A greater love through all my essence steal.’ 320

XLI

The Spirit mourn’d ‘ Adieu ! ’—dissolv’d and left
 The atom darkness in a slow turmoil ;
 As when of healthful midnight sleep bereft,
 Thinking on rugged hours and fruitless toil,
 We put our eyes into a pillowy cleft,
 And see the spangly gloom froth up and boil :
 It made sad Isabella’s eyelids ache,
 And in the dawn she started up awake ;

XLII

‘ Ha ! ha ! ’ said she, ‘ I knew not this hard life,
 ‘ I thought the worst was simple misery ;
 ‘ I thought some Fate with pleasure or with strife
 ‘ Portion’d us—happy days, or else to die ; 330

‘ But there is crime—a brother’s bloody knife !
 ‘ Sweet Spirit, thou hast school’d my infancy :
 ‘ I’ll visit thee for this, and kiss thine eyes,
 ‘ And greet thee morn and even in the skies.’

XLIII

When the full morning came, she had devised
 How she might secret to the forest hie ;
 How she might find the clay, so dearly prized,
 And sing to it one latest lullaby ;
 How her short absence might be unsurmised,
 While she the inmost of the dream would try.
 Resolv’d, she took with her an aged nurse,
 And went into that dismal forest-hearse.

340

XLIV

See, as they creep along the river side,
 How she doth whisper to that aged Dame,
 And, after looking round the champaign wide,
 Shows her a knife.—‘ What feverous hectic flame
 ‘ Burns in thee, child ?—What good can thee betide,
 ‘ That thou should’st smile again ? ’—The evening
 came,

350

And they had found Lorenzo’s earthy bed ;
 The flint was there, the berries at his head.

XLV

Who hath not loiter’d in a green church-yard,
 And let his spirit, like a demon-mole,
 Work through the clayey soil and gravel hard,
 To see the scull, coffin’d bones, and funeral stole ;
 Pitying each form that hungry Death hath marr’d,
 And filling it once more with human soul ?
 Ah ! this is holiday to what was felt
 When Isabella by Lorenzo knelt.

360

XLVI

She gaz'd into the fresh-thrown mould, as though
 One glance did fully all its secrets tell ;
 Clearly she saw, as other eyes would know
 Pale limbs at bottom of a crystal well ;
 Upon the murderous spot she seem'd to grow,
 Like to a native lilly of the dell :
 Then with her knife, all sudden, she began
 To dig more fervently than misers can.

XLVII

Soon she turn'd up a soiled glove, whercon
 Her silk had play'd in purple phantasies,
 She kiss'd it with a lip more chill than stone,
 And put it in her bosom, where it dries
 And freezes utterly unto the bone
 Those dainties made to still an infant's cries :
 Then 'gan she work again ; nor stay'd her care,
 But to throw back at times her veiling hair.

370

XLVIII

That old nurse stood beside her wondering,
 Until her heart felt pity to the core
 At sight of such a dismal labouring,
 And so she kneeled, with her locks all hoar,
 And put her lean hands to the horrid thing :
 Three hours they labour'd at this travail sore ;
 At last they felt the kernel of the grave,
 And Isabella did not stamp and rave.

380

XLIX

Ah ! wherefore all this wormy circumstance ?
 Why linger at the yawning tomb so long ?
 O for the gentleness of old Romance,
 The simple plaining of a minstrel's song !

Fair reader, at the old tale take a glance,
 For here, in truth, it doth not well belong
 To speak:—O turn thee to the very tale,
 And taste the music of that vision pale.

390

L

With duller steel than the Perséan sword
 They cut away no formless monster's head,
 But one, whose gentleness did well accord
 With death, as life. The ancient harps have said,
 Love never dies, but lives, immortal Lord:
 If Love impersonate was ever dead,
 Pale Isabella kiss'd it, and low moan'd.
 'Twas love; cold,—dead indeed, but not dethroned. 400

LI

In anxious secrecy they took it home,
 And then the prize was all for Isabel:
 She calm'd its wild hair with a golden comb,
 And all around each eye's sepulchral cell
 Pointed each fringed lash; the smeared loam
 With tears, as chilly as a dripping well,
 She drench'd away:—and still she comb'd, and kept
 Sighing all day—and still she kiss'd, and wept.

LII

Then in a silken scarf,—sweet with the dews
 Of precious flowers pluck'd in Araby,
 And divine liquids come with odorous ooze
 Through the cold serpent-pipe refreshfully,—
 She wrapp'd it up; and for its tomb did choose
 A garden-pot, wherein she laid it by,
 And cover'd it with mould, and o'er it set
 Sweet Basil, which her tears kept ever wet.

410

LIII

And she forgot the stars, the moon, and sun,
 And she forgot the blue above the trees,
 And she forgot the dells where waters run,
 And she forgot the chilly autumn breeze ;
 She had no knowledge when the day was done,
 And the new morn she saw not : but in peace
 Hung over her sweet Basil evermore,
 And moisten'd it with tears unto the core.

420

LIV

And so she ever fed it with thin tears.
 Whence thick, and green, and beautiful it grew,
 So that it smelt more balmy than its peers
 Of Basil-tufts in Florence ; for it drew
 Nurture besides, and life, from human fears,
 From the fast mouldering head there shut from view :
 So that the jewel, safely casketed,
 Came forth, and in perfumed leaflets spread.

431

LV

O Melancholy, linger here awhile !
 O Music, Music, breathe despondingly !
 O Echo, Echo, from some sombre isle,
 Unknown, Lethean, sigh to us—O sigh !
 Spirits in grief, lift up your heads, and smile ;
 Lift up your heads, sweet Spirits, heavily,
 And make a pale light in your cypress glooms,
 Tinting with silver wan your marble tombs.

440

LVI

Moan hither, all ye syllables of woe,
 From the deep throat of sad Melpomene !
 Through bronzed lyre in tragic order go,
 And touch the strings into a mystery ;

Sound mournfully upon the winds and low ;
 For simple Isabel is soon to be
 Among the dead : She withers, like a palm
 Cut by an Indian for its juicy balm.

LVII

O leave the palm to wither by itself ;
 Let not quick Winter chill its dying hour !— 450
 It may not be—those Baälites of pelf,
 Her brethren, noted the continual shower
 From her dead eyes ; and many a curious elf,
 Among her kindred, wonder'd that such dower
 Of youth and beauty should be thrown aside
 By one mark'd out to be a Noble's bride.

LVIII

And, furthermore, her brethren wonder'd much
 Why she sat drooping by the Basil green,
 And why it flourish'd, as by magic touch ;
 Greatly they wonder'd what the thing might mean
 They could not surely give belief, that such 461
 A very nothing would have power to wean
 Her from her own fair youth, and pleasures gay,
 And even remembrance of her love's delay.

LIX

Therefore they watch'd a time when they might sift
 This hidden whim ; and long they watch'd in vain ;
 For seldom did she go to chapel-shrift,
 And seldom felt she any hunger-pain ;
 And when she left, she hurried back, as swift
 As bird on wing to breast its eggs again ; 470
 And, patient as a hen-bird, sat her there
 Beside her Basil, weeping through her hair.

LX

Yet they contriv'd to steal the Basil-pot,
 And to examine it in secret place :
 The thing was vile with green and livid spot,
 And yet they knew it was Lorenzo's face :
 The guerdon of their murder they had got,
 And so left Florence in a moment's space,
 Never to turn again.—Away they went,
 With blood upon their heads, to banishment.

480

LXI

O Melancholy, turn thine eyes away !
 O Music, Music, breathe despondingly !
 O Echo, Echo, on some other day,
 From isles Lethean, sigh to us—O sigh !
 Spirits of grief, sing not your ' Well-a-way ! '
 For Isabel, sweet Isabel, will die ;
 Will die a death too lone and incomplete,
 Now they have ta'en away her Basil sweet.

LXII

Piteous she look'd on dead and senseless things,
 Asking for her lost Basil amorously ;
 And with melodious chuckle in the strings
 Of her lorn voice, she oftentimes would cry
 After the Pilgrim in his wanderings,
 To ask him where her Basil was ; and why
 'Twas hid from her : ' For cruel 'tis,' said she,
 ' To steal my Basil-pot away from me.'

490

LXIII

And so she pined, and so she died forlorn,
 Imploring for her Basil to the last.
 No heart was there in Florence but did mourn
 In pity of her love, so overcast.

500

And a sad ditty of this story born
 From mouth to mouth through all the country pass'd
 Still is the burthen sung—‘ O cruelty,
 ‘ To steal my Basil-pot away from me ! ’

THE
 EVE OF ST. AGNES

I

St. Agnes' Eve—Ah, bitter chill it was !
 The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold ;
 The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen grass,
 And silent was the flock in woolly fold : mar w^o s su
prayer
 Numb were the Beadsman's fingers, while he told
 His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
 Like pious incense from a censer old,
 Seem'd taking flight for heaven, without a death,
 Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he saith.

II

His prayer he saith, this patient, holy man ; 10
 Then takes his lamp, and riseth from his knees,
 And back returneth, meagre, barefoot, wan,
 Along the chapel aisle by slow degrees :
 The sculptur'd dead, on each side, seem to freeze,
 Emprison'd in black, purgatorial rails :
 Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries,
 He passeth by ; and his weak spirit fails
 To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails.

III

Northward he turneth through a little door,
 And scarce three steps, ere Music's golden tongue 20
 Flatter'd to tears this aged man and poor
 But no—already had his deathbell rung ;
 The joys of all his life were said and sung :

His was harsh penance on St. Agnes' Eve :
 Another way he went, and soon among
 Rough ashes sat he for his soul's reprieve,
 And all night kept awake, for sinners' sake to grieve.

IV

That ancient Beadsman heard the prelude soft ;
 And so it chanc'd, for many a door was wide,
 From hurry to and fro. Soon, up aloft,
 The silver, snarling trumpets 'gan to chide :
 The level chambers, ready with their pride,
 Were glowing to receive a thousand guests :
 The carved angels, ever eager-eyed,
 Star'd, where upon their heads the cornice rests,
 With hair blown back, and wings put cross-wise on their
 breasts.

V

At length burst in the argent revelry,
 With plume, tiara, and all rich array,
 Numerous as shadows haunting faerily
 The brain, new stuff'd, in youth, with triumphs gay
 Of old romance. These let us wish away,
 And turn, sole-thoughted, to one Lady there,
 Whose heart had brooded, all that wintry day,
 On love, and wing'd St. Agnes' saintly care,
 As she had heard old dames full many times declare.

VI

They told her how, upon St. Agnes' Eve,
 Young virgins might have visions of delight,
 And soft adorings from their loves receive
 Upon the honey'd middle of the night,
 If ceremonies due they did aright ;
 As, supperless to bed they must retire,
 And couch supine their beauties, lilly white ;
 Nor look behind, nor sideways, but require
 Of Heaven with upward eyes for all that they desire.

VII

Full of this whim was thoughtful Madeline :
 The music, yearning like a God in pain,
 She scarcely heard : her maiden eyes divine,
 Fix'd on the floor, saw many a sweeping train
 Pass by—she heeded not at all : in vain
 Came many a tiptoe, amorous cavalier, 60
 And back retir'd ; not cool'd by high disdain,
 But she saw not : her heart was elsewhere :
 She sigh'd for Agnes' dreams, the sweetest of the year.

VIII

She danc'd along with vague, regardless eyes,
 Anxious her lips, her breathing quick and short :
 The hallow'd hour was near at hand : she sighs
 Amid the timbrels, and the throng'd resort
 Of whisperers in anger, or in sport ;
 'Mid looks of love, defiance, hate, and scorn,
 Hoodwink'd with faery fancy ; all amort, 70
 Save to St. Agnes and her lambs unshorn,
 And all the bliss to be before to-morrow morn.

IX

So, purposing each moment to retire,
 She linger'd still. Meantime, across the moors,
 Had come young Porphyro, with heart on fire
 For Madeline. Beside the portal doors,
 Buttress'd from moonlight, stands he, and implores
 All saints to give him sight of Madeline,
 But for one moment in the tedious hours,
 That he might gaze and worship all unseen ; 80
 Perchance speak, kneel, touch, kiss—in sooth such things
 have been.

X

He ventures in : let no buzz'd whisper tell :
 All eyes be muffled, or a hundred swords
 Will storm his heart, Love's fev'rous citadel :
 For him, those chambers held barbarian hordes,
 Hyena foemen, and hot-blooded lords,
 Whose very dogs would execrations howl
 Against his lineage : not one breast affords
 Him any mercy, in that mansion foul,
 Save one old beldame, weak in body and in soul.

90

XI

Ah, happy chance ! the aged creature came,
 Shuffling along with ivory-headed wand,
 To where he stood, hid from the torch's flame,
 Behind a broad hall-pillar, far beyond
 The sound of merriment and chorus bland :
 He startled her ; but soon she knew his face,
 And grasp'd his fingers in her palsied hand,
 Saying, ' Mercy, Porphyro ! hie thee from this place :
 ' They are all here to-night, the whole blood-thirsty race !

XII

' Get hence ! get hence ! there 's dwarfish Hildebrand ;
 ' He had a fever late, and in the fit 101
 ' He cursed thee and thine, both house and land :
 ' Then there 's that old Lord Maurice, not a whit
 ' More tame for his gray hairs—Alas me ! flit !
 ' Flit like a ghost away.'—' Ah, Gossip dear,
 ' We're safe enough ; here in this arm-chair sit,
 ' And tell me how '—' Good Saints ! not here, not
 here :
 Follow me, child, or else these stones will be thy bier.'

XIII

He follow'd through a lowly arched way,
 Brushing the cobwebs with his lofty plume,
 And as she mutter'd ' Well-a—well-a-day ! ' 110
 He found him in a little moonlight room,
 Pale, lattic'd, chill, and silent as a tomb.
 ' Now tell me where is Madeline,' said he,
 ' O tell me, Angela, by the holy loom
 ' Which none but secret sisterhood may see,
 ' When they St. Agnes' wool are weaving piously.'

XIV

' St. Agnes ! Ah ! it is St. Agnes' Eve—
 ' Yet men will murder upon holy days :
 ' Thou must hold water in a witch's sieve,
 ' And be liege-lord of all the Elves and Fays,
 ' To venture so : it fills me with amaze
 ' To see thee, Porphyro !—St. Agnes' Eve !
 ' God's help ! my lady fair the conjuror plays
 ' This very night : good angels her deceive !
 But let me laugh awhile, I've mickle time to grieve.'

XV

Feebly she laugheth in the languid moon,
 While Porphyro upon her face doth look,
 Like puzzled urchin on an aged crone
 Who keepeth clos'd a wondrous riddle-book, 130
 As spectacled she sits in chimney nook.
 But soon his eyes grew brilliant, when she told
 His lady's purpose ; and he scarce could brook
 Tears, at the thought of those enchantments cold,
 And Madeline asleep in lap of legends old.

XVI

Sudden a thought came like a full-blown rose,
 Flushing his brow, and in his pained heart
 Made purple riot: then doth he propose
 A stratagem, that makes the beldame start:
 'A cruel man and impious thou art:
 'Sweet lady, let her pray, and sleep, and dream
 'Alone with her good angels, far apart
 'From wicked men like thee. Go, go!—I deem
 'Thou canst not surely be the same that thou didst seem.

14

XVII

'I will not harm her, by all saints I swear,'
 Quoth Porphyro: 'O may I ne'er find grace
 'When my weak voice shall whisper its last prayer,
 'If one of her soft ringlets I displace,
 'Or look with ruffian passion in her face:
 'Good Angela, believe me by these tears;
 'Or I will, even in a moment's space,
 'Awake, with horrid shout, my foemen's ears,
 'And beard them, though they be more fang'd than wolves
 and bears.'

15

XVIII

'Ah! why wilt thou affright a feeble soul?
 'A poor, weak, palsy-stricken, churchyard thing,
 'Whose passing-bell may ere the midnight toll;
 'Whose prayers for thee, each morn and evening,
 'Were never miss'd.'—Thus plaining, doth she bring
 A gentler speech from burning Porphyro;
 So woful, and of such deep sorrowing,
 That Angela gives promise she will do
 Whatever he shall wish, betide her weal or woe.

16

XIX

Which was, to lead him, in close secrecy,
 Even to Madeline's chamber, and there hide
 Him in a closet, of such privacy
 That he might see her beauty unespied,
 And win perhaps that night a peerless bride,
 While legion'd faeries pac'd the coverlet,
 And pale enchantment held her sleepy-eyed.
 Never on such a night have lovers met, 170
 Since Merlin paid his Demon all the monstrous debt.

XX

'It shall be as thou wishest,' said the Dame:
 'All cates and dainties shall be stored there
 'Quickly on this feast-night: by the tambour frame
 'Her own lute thou wilt see: no time to spare,
 'For I am slow and feeble, and scarce dare
 'On such a catering trust my dizzy head.
 'Wait here, my child, with patience; kneel in prayer
 'The while: Ah! thou must needs the lady wed,
 'Or may I never leave my grave among the dead.' 180

XXI

So saying, she hobbled off with busy fear.
 The lover's endless minutes slowly pass'd;
 The dame return'd, and whisper'd in his ear
 To follow her; with aged eyes aghast
 From fright of dim espial. Safe at last,
 Through many a dusky gallery, they gain
 The maiden's chamber, silken, hush'd, and chaste;
 Where Porphyro took covert, pleas'd amain.
 His poor guide hurried back with agues in her brain.

XXII

Her falt'ring hand upon the balustrade,
 Old Angela was feeling for the stair,
 When Madeline, St. Agnes' charmed maid,
 Rose, like a mission'd spirit, unaware :
 With silver taper's light, and pious care,
 She turn'd, and down the aged gossip led
 To a safe level matting. Now prepare,
 Young Porphyro, for gazing on that bed ;
 She comes, she comes again, like ring-dove fray'd and fled.

190

XXIII

Out went the taper as she hurried in ;
 Its little smoke, in pallid moonshine, died :
 She clos'd the door, she panted, all akin
 To spirits of the air, and visions wide :
 No uttered syllable, or, woe betide !
 But to her heart, her heart was voluble,
 Paining with eloquence her balmy side ;
 As though a tongueless nightingale should swell
 Her throat in vain, and die, heart-stifled, in her dell.

200

XXIV

A casement high and triple-arch'd there was,
 All garlanded with carven imag'ries
 Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass, 210
 And diamonded with panes of quaint device,
 Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,
 As are the tiger-moth's deep-damask'd wings ;
 And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,
 And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,
 A shielded scutcheon blush'd with blood of queens and
 kings.

XXV

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,
And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast,
As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon ;
Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest, 220
And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
And on her hair a glory, like a saint :
She seem'd a splendid angel, newly drest,
Save wings, for heaven :—Porphyro grew faint :
She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint.

XXVI

Anon his heart revives : her vespers done,
Of all its wreathed pearls her hair she frees ;
Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one ;
Loosens her fragrant boddice ; by degrees
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees : 230
Half-hidden, like a mermaid in sea-weed,
Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees,
In fancy, fair St. Agnes in her bed,
But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled.

XXVII

Soon, trembling in her soft and chilly nest,
In sort of wakeful swoon, perplex'd she lay,
Until the poppied warmth of sleep oppress'd
Her soothed limbs, and soul fatigued away ;
Flown, like a thought, until the morrow-day ;
Blissfully haven'd both from joy and pain ; 240
Clasp'd like a missal where swart Paynims pray
Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,
As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again.

XXVIII

Stol'n to this paradise, and so entranced,
 Porphyro gazed upon her empty dress,
 And listen'd to her breathing, if it chanced
 To wake into a slumberous tenderness ;
 Which when he heard, that minute did he bless,
 And breath'd himself : then from the closet crept,
 Noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness, 250
 And over the hush'd carpet, silent, stept,
 And 'tween the curtains peep'd, where, lo !—how fast
 she slept.

XXIX

Then by the bed-side, where the faded moon
 Made a dim, silver twilight, soft he set
 A table, and, half anguish'd, threw thereon
 A cloth of woven crimson, gold, and jet :—
 O for some drowsy Morphean amulet !
 The boisterous, midnight, festive clarion,
 The kettle-drum, and far-heard clarionet,
 Affray his ears, though but in dying tone :— 260

¶ The hall door shuts again, and all the noise is gone.

XXX

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,
 In blanched linen, smooth, and lavender'd,
 While he from forth the closet brought a heap
 Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd ;
 With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
 And lucent syrups, tinct with cinnamon ;
 Manna and dates, in argosy transferr'd
 From Fez ; and spiced dainties, every one,
 From silken Samarcand to cedar'd Lebanon. 270

XXXI

These delicates he heap'd with glowing hand
On golden dishes and in baskets bright
Of wreathed silver: sumptuous they stand
In the retired quiet of the night,
Filling the chilly room with perfume light.—
' And now, my love, my seraph fair, awake !
' Thou art my heaven, and I thine eremite :
' Open thine eyes, for meek St. Agnes' sake,
' Or I shall drowse beside thee, so my soul doth ache.'

xxxii

Thus whispering, his warm, unnerved arm
Sank in her pillow. Shaded was her dream
By the dusk curtains :—'twas a midnight charm
Impossible to melt as iced stream :
The lustrous salvers in the moonlight gleam ;
Broad golden fringe upon the carpet lies :
It seem'd he never, never could redeem
From such a stedfast spell his lady's eyes ;
So mus'd awhile, entoil'd in woofed phantasies.

XXXIII

Awakening up, he took her hollow lute,—
Tumultuous,—and, in chords that tenderest be, 290
He play'd an ancient ditty, long since mute,
In Provence call'd, ' *La belle dame sans mercy* :'
Close to her ear touching the melody ;—
Wherewith disturb'd, she utter'd a soft moan :
He ceased—she panted quick—and suddenly
Her blue affrayed eyes wide open shone :
Upon his knees he sank, pale as smooth-sculptured
stone.

XXXIV

Her eyes were open, but she still beheld,
 Now wide awake, the vision of her sleep :
 There was a painful change, that nigh expell'd
 The blisses of her dream so pure and deep
 At which fair Madeline began to weep,
 And moan forth witless words with many a sigh ;
 While still her gaze on Porphyro would keep ;
 Who knelt, with joined hands and piteous eye,
 Fearing to move or speak, she look'd so dreamingly.

300

XXXV

‘Ah, Porphyro !’ said she, ‘but even now
 ‘Thy voice was at sweet tremble in mine ear,
 ‘Made tuneable with every sweetest vow ;
 ‘And those sad eyes were spiritual and clear : 310
 ‘How chang'd thou art ! how pallid, chill, and drear !
 ‘Give me that voice again, my Porphyro,
 ‘Those looks immortal, those complainings dear !
 ‘Oh leave me not in this eternal woe,
 ‘For if thou diest, my Love, I know not where to go.’

310

XXXVI

Beyond a mortal man impassion'd far
 At these voluptuous accents, he arose,
 Ethereal, flush'd, and like a throbbing star
 Seen mid the sapphire heaven's deep repose ;
 Into her dream he melted, as the rose
 Blendeth its odour with the violet,—
 Solution sweet : meantime the frost-wind blows
 Like Love's alarum pattering the sharp sleet
 Against the window-panes ; St. Agnes' moon hath set.

320

XXXVII

'Tis dark : quick pattereth the flaw-blown sleet :
 ' This is no dream, my bride, my Madeline ! '
 'Tis dark : the iced gusts still rave and beat :
 ' No dream, alas ! alas ! and woe is mine !
 ' Porphyro will leave me here to fade and pine.—
 ' Cruel ! what traitor could thee hither bring ? 330
 ' I curse not, for my heart is lost in thine,
 ' Though thou forsakest a deceived thing ;—
 ' A dove forlorn and lost with sick unpruned wing.'

XXXVIII

' My Madeline ! sweet dreamer ! lovely bride !
 ' Say, may I be for aye thy vassal blest ?
 ' Thy beauty's shield, heart-shap'd and vermeil dyed ?
 ' Ah, silver shrine, here will I take my rest
 ' After so many hours of toil and quest,
 ' A famish'd pilgrim,—saved by miracle.
 ' Though I have found, I will not rob thy nest 340
 ' Saving of thy sweet self ; if thou think'st well
 ' To trust, fair Madeline, to no rude infidel.

XXXIX

' Hark ! 'tis an elfin-storm from faery land,
 ' Of haggard seeming, but a boon indeed :
 ' Arise—arise ! the morning is at hand ;—
 ' The bloated wassailers will never heed :—
 ' Let us away, my love, with happy speed ;
 ' There are no ears to hear, or eyes to see,—
 ' Drown'd all in Rhenish and the sleepy mead :
 ' Awake ! arise ! my love, and fearless be, 350
 ' For o'er the southern moors I have a home for thee.'

XL

She hurried at his words, beset with fears,
 For there were sleeping dragons all around,
 At glaring watch, perhaps, with ready spears—
 Down the wide stairs a darkling way they found—
 In all the house was heard no human sound.
 A chain-droop'd lamp was flickering by each door ;
 The arras, rich with horseman, hawk, and hound,
 Flutter'd in the besieging wind's uproar ;
 And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor. 360

XLI

They glide, like phantoms, into the wide hall ;
 Like phantoms, to the iron porch, they glide ;
 Where lay the Porter, in uneasy sprawl,
 With a huge empty flaggon by his side :
 The wakeful bloodhound rose, and shook his hide,
 But his sagacious eye an inmate owns :
 By one, and one, the bolts full easy slide :—
 The chains lie silent on the footworn stones ;—
 The key turns, and the door upon its hinges groans. X

XLII

And they are gone : ay, ages long ago 370
 These lovers fled away into the storm.
 That night the Baron dreamt of many a woe,
 And all his warrior-guests, with shade and form
 Of witch, and demon, and large coffin-worm,
 Were long be-nightmar'd. Angela the old
 Died palsy-twitch'd, with meagre face deform ;
 The Beadsman, after thousand aves told,
 For aye unsought for slept among his ashes cold.

ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE

I

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
 My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
 Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
 One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk :
 'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
 But being too happy in thine happiness,—
 That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees,
 In some melodious plot
 Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
 Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

10

2

O, for a draught of vintage ! that hath been
 Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,
 Tasting of Flora and the country green,
 Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth !
 O for a beaker full of the warm South,
 Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
 With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
 And purple-stained mouth ;
 That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
 And with thee fade away into the forest dim :

20

3

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
 What thou among the leaves hast never known,
 The weariness, the fever, and the fret
 Here, where men sit and hear each other groan ;
 Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,

Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies ;
 Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
 And leaden-eyed despairs,
 Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
 Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

30

4

Away ! away ! for I will fly to thee,
 Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
 But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
 Though the dull brain perplexes and retards :
 Already with thee ! tender is the night,
 And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
 Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays ;
 But here there is no light,
 Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
 Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

5

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
 Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
 But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
 Wherewith the seasonable month endows
 The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild ;
 White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine ;
 Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves ;
 And mid-May's eldest child,
 The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
 The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

41

50

6

Darkling I listen ; and, for many a time
 I have been half in love with easeful Death,
 Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
 To take into the air my quiet breath ;
 Now more than ever seems it rich to die,

To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
 While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
 In such an ecstasy !
 Still wouldest thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
 To thy high requiem become a sod.

60

7

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird !
 No hungry generations tread thee down ;
 The voice I hear this passing night was heard
 In ancient days by emperor and clown :
 Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
 Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
 She stood in tears amid the alien corn ;
 The same that oft-times hath
 Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
 Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

70

8

Forlorn ! the very word is like a bell
 To toll me back from thee to my sole self !
 Adieu ! the fancy cannot cheat so well
 As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.
 Adieu ! adieu ! thy plaintive anthem fades
 Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
 Up the hill-side ; and now 'tis buried deep
 In the next valley-glades :
 Was it a vision, or a waking dream ?
 Fled is that music :—Do I wake or sleep ?

80

ODE ON A GRECIAN URN

I

THOU still unravish'd bride of quietness,
 Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
 Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
 A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme :
 What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape
 Of deities or mortals, or of both,
 In Tempe or the dales of Arcady ?
 What men or gods are these ? What maidens loth ?
 What mad pursuit ? What struggle to escape ?
 What pipes and timbrels ? What wild ecstasy ? 10

2

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
 Are sweeter ; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on ;
 Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
 Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone :
 Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
 Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare ;
 Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
 Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve ;
 She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
 For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair ! 20

3

Ah, happy, happy boughs ! that cannot shed
 Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu ;
 And, happy melodist, unwearied,
 For ever piping songs for ever new ;

More happy love ! more happy, happy love !
 For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
 For ever panting, and for ever young ;
 All breathing human passion far above,
 That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,
 A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

30

4

Who are these coming to the sacrifice ?
 To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
 Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
 And all her silken flanks with garlands drest ?
 What little town by river or sea shore,
 Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
 Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn ?
 And, little town, thy streets for evermore
 Will silent be ; and not a soul to tell
 Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

40

5

O Attic shape ! Fair attitude ! with brede
 Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
 With forest branches and the trodden weed ;
 Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
 As doth eternity : Cold Pastoral !
 When old age shall this generation waste,
 Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
 Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,'—that is all
 Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

50

ODE TO PSYCHE

O GODDESS ! hear these tuneless numbers, wrung
 By sweet enforcement and remembrance dear,
 And pardon that thy secrets should be sung
 Even into thine own soft-conched ear :
 Surely I dreamt to-day, or did I see
 The winged Psyche with awaken'd eyes ?
 I wander'd in a forest thoughtlessly,
 And, on the sudden, fainting with surprise,
 Saw two fair creatures, couched side by side
 In deepest grass, beneath the whisp'ring roof
 Of leaves and trembled blossoms, where there ran
 A brooklet, scarce espied :

'Mid hush'd, cool-rooted flowers, fragrant-eyed,
 Blue, silver-white, and budded Tyrian,
 They lay calm-breathing on the bedded grass ;
 Their arms embraced, and their pinions too ;
 Their lips touch'd not, but had not bade adieu,
 As if disjoined by soft-handed slumber,
 And ready still past kisses to outnumber
 At tender eye-dawn of auorean love :
 The winged boy I knew ;
 But who wast thou, O happy, happy dove ?
 His Psyche true !

O latest born and loveliest vision far
 Of all Olympus' faded hierarchy !
 Fairer than Phœbe's sapphire-region'd star,
 Or Vesper, amorous glow-worm of the sky ;
 Fairer than these, though temple thou hast none,
 Nor altar heap'd with flowers ;
 Nor virgin-choir to make delicious moan
 Upon the midnight hours ;

10

20

30

No voice, no lute, no pipe, no incense sweet
 From chain-swung censer teeming ;
 No shrine, no grove, no oracle, no heat
 Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.

O brightest ! though too late for antique vows,
 Too, too late for the fond believing lyre,
 When holy were the haunted forest boughs,
 Holy the air, the water, and the fire ;
 Yet even in these days so far retir'd 40
 From happy pieties, thy lucent fans,
 Fluttering among the faint Olympians,
 I see, and sing, by my own eyes inspired.
 So let me be thy choir, and make a moan
 Upon the midnight hours ;
 Thy voice, thy lute, thy pipe, thy incense sweet
 From swinged censer teeming ;
 Thy shrine, thy grove, thy oracle, thy heat
 Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.

Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane 50
 In some untrodden region of my mind,
 Where branched thoughts, new grown with pleasant pain,
 Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind :
 Far, far around shall those dark-cluster'd trees
 Fledge the wild-ridged mountains steep by steep ;
 And there by zephyrs, streams, and birds, and bees,
 The moss-lain Dryads shall be lull'd to sleep ;
 And in the midst of this wide quietness
 A rosy sanctuary will I dress
 With the wreath'd trellis of a working brain, 60
 With buds, and bells, and stars without a name,
 With all the gardener Fancy e'er could feign,
 Who breeding flowers, will never breed the same :

And there shall be for thee all soft delight
That shadowy thought can win,
A bright torch, and a casement ope at night,
To let the warm Love in !

FANCY

EVER let the Fancy roam,
Pleasure never is at home :
At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth,
Like to bubbles when rain pelteth ;
Then let winged Fancy wander
Through the thought still spread beyond her :
Open wide the mind's cage-door,
She'll dart forth, and cloudward soar.
O sweet Fancy ! let her loose ;
Summer's joys are spoilt by use,
And the enjoying of the Spring
Fades as does its blossoming ;
Autumn's red-lipp'd fruitage too,
Blushing through the mist and dew,
Cloys with tasting : What do then ?
Sit thee by the ingle, when
The sear faggot blazes bright,
Spirit of a winter's night ;
When the soundless earth is muffled,
And the caked snow is shuffled
From the ploughboy's heavy shoon ;
When the Night doth meet the Noon
In a dark conspiracy
To banish Even from her sky.
Sit thee there, and send abroad,
With a mind self-overaw'd,
Fancy, high-commission'd :—send her !
She has vassals to attend her :

She will bring, in spite of frost,
 Beauties that the earth hath lost ;
 She will bring thee, all together,
 All delights of summer weather ;
 All the buds and bells of May,
 From dewy sward or thorny spray ;
 All the heaped Autumn's wealth,
 With a still, mysterious stealth :
 She will mix these pleasures up
 Like three fit wines in a cup,
 And thou shalt quaff it :—thou shalt hear
 Distant harvest-carols clear ;
 Rustle of the reaped corn ;
 Sweet birds antheming the morn :
 And, in the same moment—hark !
 'Tis the early April lark,
 Or the rooks, with busy caw,
 Foraging for sticks and straw.
 Thou shalt, at one glance, behold
 The daisy and the marigold ;
 White-plum'd lillies, and the first
 Hedge-grown primrose that hath burst ;
 Shaded hyacinth, alway
 Sapphire queen of the mid-May ;
 And every leaf, and every flower
 Pearled with the self-same shower.
 Thou shalt see the field-mouse peep
 Meagre from its celled sleep ;
 And the snake all winter-thin
 Cast on sunny bank its skin ;
 Freckled nest-eggs thou shalt see
 Hatching in the hawthorn-tree,
 When the hen-bird's wing doth rest
 Quiet on her mossy nest ;
 Then the hurry and alarm
 When the bee-hive casts its swarm ;

60

Acorns ripe down-pattering,
While the autumn breezes sing.

Oh, sweet Fancy ! let her loose ;
Every thing is spoilt by use :
Where 's the cheek that doth not fade,
Too much gaz'd at ? Where 's the maid
Whose lip mature is ever new ?
Where 's the eye, however blue,
Doth not weary ? Where 's the face
One would meet in every place ?
Where 's the voice, however soft,
One would hear so very oft ?
At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth
Like to bubbles when rain pelteth.
Let, then, winged Fancy find
Thee a mistress to thy mind :
Dulcet-eyed as Ceres' daughter,
Ere the God of Torment taught her
How to frown and how to chide :
With a waist and with a side
White as Hebe's, when her zone
Slipt its golden clasp, and down
Fell her kirtle to her feet,
While she held the goblet sweet,
And Jove grew languid.—Break the mesh
Of the Fancy's silken leash ;
Quickly break her prison-string
And such joys as these she'll bring.—
Let the winged Fancy roam,
Pleasure never is at home.

70

80

90

ODE

BARDS of Passion and of Mirth,
 Ye have left your souls on earth !
 Have ye souls in heaven too,
 Double-lived in regions new ?
 Yes, and those of heaven commune
 With the spheres of sun and moon ;
 With the noise of fountains wond'rous,
 And the parle of voices thund'rous ;
 With the whisper of heaven's trees
 And one another, in soft ease
 Seated on Elysian lawns
 Brows'd by none but Dian's fawns ;
 Underneath large blue-bells tented,
 Where the daisies are rose-scented,
 And the rose herself has got
 Perfume which on earth is not ;
 Where the nightingale doth sing
 Not a senseless, tranced thing,
 But divine melodious truth ;
 Philosophic numbers smooth ;
 Tales and golden histories
 Of heaven and its mysteries.

Thus ye live on high, and then
 On the earth ye live again ;
 And the souls ye left behind you
 Teach us, here, the way to find you,
 Where your other souls are joying,
 Never slumber'd, never cloying.
 Here, your earth-born souls still speak
 To mortals, of their little week ;
 Of their sorrows and delights ;
 Of their passions and their spites ;

10

20

30

Of their glory and their shame ;
 What doth strengthen and what maim.
 Thus ye teach us, every day,
 Wisdom, though fled far away.

Bards of Passion and of Mirth,
 Ye have left your souls on earth !
 Ye have souls in heaven too,
 Double-lived in regions new !

40

LINES
 ON
 THE MERMAID TAVERN

SOULS of Poets dead and gone,
 What Elysium have ye known,
 Happy field or mossy cavern,
 Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern ?
 Have ye tippled drink more fine
 Than mine host's Canary wine ?
 Or are fruits of Paradise
 Sweeter than those dainty pies
 Of venison ? O generous food !
 Drest as though bold Robin Hood
 Would, with his maid Marian,
 Sup and bowse from horn and can.

10

I have heard that on a day
 Mine host's sign-board flew away,
 Nobody knew whither, till
 An astrologer's old quill
 To a sheepskin gave the story,
 Said he saw you in your glory,

Underneath a new old sign
 Sipping beverage divine,
 And pledging with contented smack
 The Mermaid in the Zodiac.

20

Souls of Poets dead and gone,
 What Elysium have ye known,
 Happy field or mossy cavern,
 Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern ?

ROBIN HOOD

TO A FRIEND

No ! those days are gone away,
 And their hours are old and grey,
 And their minutes buried all
 Under the down-trodden pall
 Of the leaves of many years :
 Many times have winter's shears,
 Frozen North, and chilling East,
 Sounding tempests to the feast
 Of the forest's whispering fleeces,
 Since men knew nor rent nor leases.

10

No, the bugle sounds no more,
 And the twanging bow no more ;
 Silent is the ivory shrill
 Past the heath and up the hill ;
 There is no mid-forest laugh,
 Where lone Echo gives the half
 To some wight, amaz'd to hear
 Jesting, deep in forest drear.

On the fairest time of June
 You may go, with sun or moon,

20

Or the seven stars to light you,
Or the polar ray to right you ;
But you never may behold
Little John, or Robin bold ;
Never one, of all the clan,
Thrumming on an empty can
Some old hunting ditty, while
He doth his green way beguile
To fair hostess Merriment,
Down beside the pasture Trent ;
For he left the merry tale
Messenger for spicy ale.

Gone, the merry morris din ;
Gone, the song of Gamelyn ;
Gone, the tough-belted outlaw
Idling in the 'grenè shawe' ;
All are gone away and past !
And if Robin should be cast
Sudden from his turfed grave,
And if Marian should have
Once again her forest days,
She would weep, and he would craze :
He would swear, for all his oaks,
Fall'n beneath the dockyard strokes,
Have rotted on the briny seas ;
She would weep that her wild bees
Sang not to her—strange ! that honey
Can't be got without hard money !

So it is : yet let us sing,
Honour to the old bow-string !
Honour to the bugle-horn !
Honour to the woods unshorn !
Honour to the Lincoln green !
Honour to the archer keen !

Honour to tight little John,
And the horse he rode upon !
Honour to bold Robin Hood,
Sleeping in the underwood !
Honour to maid Marian,
And to all the Sherwood-clan !
Though their days have hurried by
Let us two a burden try.

60

TO AUTUMN

1

SEASON of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun ;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run ;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core ;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel ; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells. 10

2

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store ?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind ;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers :
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook ;
Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring ? Ay, where are they ?
 Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—
 While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
 And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue ;
 Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
 Among the river sallows, borne aloft
 Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies ;
 And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn ;
 Hedge-crickets sing ; and now with treble soft
 The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft ;
 And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

ODE ON MELANCHOLY

I

No, no, go not to Lethe, neither twist
 Wolf's-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine ;
 Nor suffer thy pale forehead to be kiss'd
 By nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine ;
 Make not your rosary of yew-berries,
 Nor let the beetle, nor the death-moth be
 Your mournful Psyche, nor the downy owl
 A partner in your sorrow's mysteries ;
 For shade to shade will come too drowsily,
 And drown the wakeful anguish of the soul.

2

But when the melancholy fit shall fall
 Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,
 That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,
 And hides the green hill in an April shroud ;
 Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,
 Or on the rainbow of the salt sand wave,

Or on the wealth of globed peonies ;
 Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
 Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave,
 And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes. 20

3

She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die ;
 And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
 Bidding adieu ; and aching Pleasure nigh,
 Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips :
 Ay, in the very temple of Delight
 Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine,
 Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
 Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine ;
 His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
 And be among her cloudy trophies hung. 30

H Y P E R I O N

A FRAGMENT

BOOK I

DEEP in the shady sadness of a vale
 Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,
 Far from the fiery noon, and eve's one star,
 Sat gray-hair'd Saturn, quiet as a stone,
 Still as the silence round about his lair ;
 Forest on forest hung about his head
 Like cloud on cloud. No stir of air was there,
 Not so much life as on a summer's day
 Robs not one light seed from the feather'd grass,
 But where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest. 10
 A stream went voiceless by, still deadened more
 By reason of his fallen divinity
 Spreading a shade : the Naiad 'mid her reeds
 Press'd her cold finger closer to her lips.

Along the margin-sand large foot-marks went,
No further than to where his feet had stray'd,
And slept there since. Upon the sodden ground
His old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead,
Unsceptred ; and his realmless eyes were closed ;
While his bow'd head seem'd list'ning to the Earth,
His ancient mother, for some comfort yet.

It seem'd no force could wake him from his place ;
But there came one, who with a kindred hand
Touch'd his wide shoulders, after bending low
With reverence, though to one who knew it not.
She was a Goddess of the infant world ;
By her in stature the tall Amazon
Had stood a pigmy's height : she would have ta'en
Achilles by the hair and bent his neck ;
Or with a finger stay'd Ixion's wheel.
Her face was large as that of Memphian sphinx,
Pedestal'd haply in a palace court,
When sages look'd to Egypt for their lore.
But oh ! how unlike marble was that face :
How beautiful, if sorrow had not made
Sorrow more beautiful than Beauty's self.
There was a listening fear in her regard,
As if calamity had but begun ;
As if the vanward clouds of evil days
Had spent their malice, and the sullen rear
Was with its stored thunder labouring up.
One hand she press'd upon that aching spot
Where beats the human heart, as if just there,
Though an immortal, she felt cruel pain :
The other upon Saturn's bended neck
She laid, and to the level of his ear
Leaning with parted lips, some words she spake
In solemn tenour and deep organ tone :

Some mourning words, which in our feeble tongue
 Would come in these like accents ; O how frail 50
 To that large utterance of the early Gods !
 ' Saturn, look up !—though wherefore, poor old King ?
 ' I have no comfort for thee, no not one :
 ' I cannot say, " O wherefore sleepest thou ? "
 ' For heaven is parted from thee, and the earth
 ' Knows thee not, thus afflicted, for a God ;
 ' And ocean too, with all its solemn noise,
 ' Has from thy sceptre pass'd ; and all the air
 ' Is emptied of thine hoary majesty.
 ' Thy thunder, conscious of the new command, 60
 ' Rumbles reluctant o'er our fallen house ;
 ' And thy sharp lightning in unpractised hands
 ' Scorches and burns our once serene domain.
 ' O aching time ! O moments big as years !
 ' All as ye pass swell out the monstrous truth,
 ' And press it so upon our weary griefs
 ' That unbelief has not a space to breathe.
 ' Saturn, sleep on :—O thoughtless, why did I
 ' Thus violate thy slumbrous solitude ?
 ' Why should I ope thy melancholy eyes ? 70
 ' Saturn, sleep on ! while at thy feet I weep.'

As when, upon a tranced summer-night,
 Those green-rob'd senators of mighty woods,
 Tall oaks, branch-charmed by the earnest stars,
 Dream, and so dream all night without a stir,
 Save from one gradual solitary gust
 Which comes upon the silence, and dies off,
 As if the ebbing air had but one wave ;
 So came these words and went ; the while in tears
 She touch'd her fair large forehead to the ground, 80
 Just where her falling hair might be outspread
 A soft and silken mat for Saturn's feet.

One moon, with alteration slow, had shed
Her silver seasons four upon the night,
And still these two were postured motionless,
Like natural sculpture in cathedral cavern ;
The frozen God still couchant on the earth,
And the sad Goddess weeping at his feet :
Until at length old Saturn lifted up
His faded eyes, and saw his kingdom gone,
And all the gloom and sorrow of the place,
And that fair kneeling Goddess ; and then spake,
As with a palsied tongue, and while his beard
Shook horrid with such aspen-malady :
' O tender spouse of gold Hyperion,
' Thea, I feel thee ere I see thy face ;
' Look up, and let me see our doom in it ;
' Look up, and tell me if this feeble shape
' Is Saturn's ; tell me, if thou hear'st the voice
' Of Saturn ; tell me, if this wrinkling brow,
• ' Naked and bare of its great diadem,
' Peers like the front of Saturn. Who had power
' To make me desolate ? whence came the strength ?
' How was it nurtur'd to such bursting forth,
' While Fate seem'd strangled in my nervous grasp ?
' But it is so ; and I am smother'd up,
' And buried from all godlike exercise
' Of influence benign on planets pale,
' Of admonitions to the winds and seas,
' Of peaceful sway above man's harvesting,
' And all those acts which Deity supreme
' Doth ease its heart of love in.—I am gone
' Away from my own bosom : I have left
' My strong identity, my real self,
' Somewhere between the throne, and whcre I sit
' Here on this spot of earth. Search, Thea, search !
' Open thine eyes eterne, and sphere them round

'Upon all space : space starr'd, and lorn of light ;
 'Space region'd with life-air ; and barren void ;
 'Spaces of fire, and all the yawn of hell.— 120
 'Search, Thea, search ! and tell me, if thou seest
 'A certain shape or shadow, making way
 'With wings or chariot fierce to reposess
 'A heaven he lost erewhile : it must—it must
 'Be of ripe progress—Saturn must be King.
 'Yes, there must be a golden victory ;
 'There must be Gods thrown down, and trumpets blown
 'Of triumph calm, and hymns of festival
 'Upon the gold clouds metropolitan,
 'Voices of soft proclaim, and silver stir 130
 'Of strings in hollow shells ; and there shall be
 'Beautiful things made new, for the surprise
 'Of the sky-children ; I will give command :
 'Thea ! Thea ! Thea ! where is Saturn ? '

This passion lifted him upon his feet,
 And made his hands to struggle in the air,
 His Druid locks to shake and ooze with sweat,
 His eyes to fever out, his voice to cease.

He stood, and heard not Thea's sobbing deep ;

A little time, and then again he snatch'd

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Utterance thus.—' But cannot I create ?

'Cannot I form ? Cannot I fashion forth

'Another world, another universe,

'To overbear and crumble this to nought ?

'Where is another chaos ? Where ? '—That word

Found way unto Olympus, and made quake

The rebel three.—Thea was startled up,

And in her bearing was a sort of hope,

As thus she quick-voic'd spake, yet full of awe.

' This cheers our fallen house : come to our friends, 150

'O Saturn ! come away, and give them heart ;

‘I know the covert, for thence came I hither.’
 Thus brief; then with beseeching eyes she went
 With backward footing through the shade a space:
 He follow’d, and she turn’d to lead the way
 Through aged boughs, that yielded like the mist
 Which eagles cleave upmounting from their nest.

Meanwhile in other realms big tears were shed,
 More sorrow like to this, and such like woe,
 Too huge for mortal tongue or pen of scribe: 160
 The Titans fierce, self-hid, or prison-bound,
 Groan’d for the old allegiance once more,
 And listen’d in sharp pain for Saturn’s voice.
 But one of the whole mammoth-brood still kept
 His sov’reignty, and rule, and majesty;—
 Blazing Hyperion on his orbed fire
 Still sat, still snuff’d the incense, teeming up
 From man to the sun’s God; yet unsecure:
 For as among us mortals omens drear
 Fright and perplex, so also shuddered he—
 Not at dog’s howl, or gloom-bird’s hated screech,
 Or the familiar visiting of one 170
 Upon the first toll of his passing-bell,
 Or prophesyings of the midnight lamp;
 But horrors, portion’d to a giant nerve,
 Oft made Hyperion ache. His palace bright
 Bastion’d with pyramids of glowing gold,
 And touched with shade of bronzed obelisks,
 Glar’d a blood-red through all its thousand courts,
 Arches, and domes, and fiery galleries; 180
 And all its curtains of Aurorian clouds
 Flush’d angerly: while sometimes eagle’s wings,
 Unseen before by Gods or wondering men,
 Darken’d the place; and neighing steeds were heard,
 Not heard before by Gods or wondering men.

Also, when he would taste the spicy wreaths
 Of incense, breath'd aloft from sacred hills,
 Instead of sweets, his ample palate took
 Savour of poisonous brass and metal sick :
 And so, when harbour'd in the sleepy west, 190
 After the full completion of fair day,—
 For rest divine upon exalted couch
 And slumber in the arms of melody,
 He pac'd away the pleasant hours of ease
 With stride colossal, on from hall to hall ;
 While far within each aisle and deep recess,
 His winged minions in close clusters stood,
 Amaz'd and full of fear ; like anxious men
 Who on wide plains gather in panting troops,
 When earthquakes jar their battlements and towers. 200
 Even now, while Saturn, rous'd from icy trance,
 Went step for step with Thea through the woods,
 Hyperion, leaving twilight in the rear,
 Came slope upon the threshold of the west ;
 Then, as was wont, his palace-door flew ope
 In smoothest silence, save what solemn tubes,
 Blown by the serious Zephyrs, gave of sweet
 And wandering sounds, slow-breathed melodies ;
 And like a rose in vermeil tint and shape,
 In fragrance soft, and coolness to the eye, 210
 That inlet to severe magnificence
 Stood full blown, for the God to enter in.

He enter'd, but he enter'd full of wrath ;
 His flaming robes stream'd out beyond his heels,
 And gave a roar, as if of earthly fire,
 That scar'd away the meek ethereal Hours
 And made their dove-wings tremble. On he flared,
 From stately nave to nave, from vault to vault,
 Through bowers of fragrant and enwreathed light,

And diamond-paved lustrous long arcades,
Until he reach'd the great main cupola ;

There standing fierce beneath, he stamp'd his foot,
And from the basements deep to the high towers
Jarr'd his own golden region ; and before
The quavering thunder thereupon had ceas'd,
His voice leapt out, despite of godlike curb,
To this result : ' O dreams of day and night !

' O monstrous forms ! O effigies of pain !

' O spectres busy in a cold, cold gloom !

' O lank-eared Phantoms of black-weeded pools !

' Why do I know ye ? why have I seen ye ? why

' Is my eternal essence thus distraught

' To see and to behold these horrors new ?

' Saturn is fallen, am I too to fall ?

' Am I to leave this haven of my rest,

' This cradle of my glory, this soft clime,

' This calm luxuriance of blissful light,

' These crystalline pavilions, and pure fanes,

' Of all my lucent empire ? It is left

' Desereted, void, nor any haunt of mine.

' The blaze, the splendor, and the symmetry,

' I cannot see—but darkness, death and darkness.

' Even here, into my centre of repose,

' The shady visions come to domineer,

' Insult, and blind, and stifle up my pomp.—

' Fall !—No, by Tellus and her briny robes !

' Over the fiery frontier of my realms

' I will advance a terrible right arm

' Shall scare that infant thunderer, rebel Jove,

' And bid old Saturn take his throne again.'—

He spake, and ceas'd, the while a heavier threat

Held struggle with his throat but came not forth ;

For as in theatres of crowded men

Hubbub increases more they call out ' Hush ! '

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So at Hyperion's words the Phantoms pale
 Bestirr'd themselves, thrice horrible and cold ;
 And from the mirror'd level where he stood
 A mist arose as from a scummy marsh.
 At this, through all his bulk an agony
 Crept gradual, from the feet unto the crown, 260
 Like a lithe serpent vast and muscular
 Making slow way, with head and neck convuls'd
 From over-strained might. Releas'd, he fled
 To the eastern gates, and full six dewy hours
 Before the dawn in season due should blush,
 He breath'd fierce breath against the sleepy portals,
 Clear'd them of heavy vapours, burst them wide
 Suddenly on the ocean's chilly streams.
 The planet orb of fire, whereon he rode
 Each day from east to west the heavens through, 270
 Spun round in sable curtaining of clouds ;
 Not therefore veiled quite, blindfold, and hid,
 But ever and anon the glancing spheres,
 Circles, and arcs, and broad-belting colure,
 Glow'd through, and wrought upon the muffling dark
 Sweet-shaped lightnings from the nadir deep
 Up to the zenith,—hieroglyphics old
 Which sages and keen-eyed astrologers
 Then living on the earth, with labouring thought
 Won from the gaze of many centuries : 280
 Now lost, save what we find on remnants huge
 Of stone, or marble swart ; their import gone,
 Their wisdom long since fled.—Two wings this orb
 Possess'd for glory, two fair argent wings,
 Ever exalted at the God's approach :
 And now, from forth the gloom their plumes immense
 Rose, one by one, till all outspread were ;
 While still the dazzling globe maintain'd eclipse
 Awaiting for Hyperion's command.

Fain would he have commanded, fain took throne 290
 And bid the day begin, if but for change.

He might not :—No, though a primeval God :
 The sacred seasons might not be disturb'd.

Therefore the operations of the dawn
 Stay'd in their birth, even as here 'tis told.

Those silver wings expanded sisterly,
 Eager to sail their orb ; the porches wide
 Open'd upon the dusk demesnes of night ;
 And the bright Titan, phrenzied with new woes,
 Unus'd to bend, by hard compulsion bent 300

His spirit to the sorrow of the time ;
 And all along a dismal rack of clouds,
 Upon the boundaries of day and night,
 He stretch'd himself in grief and radiance faint.

There as he lay, the Heaven with its stars
 Look'd down on him with pity, and the voice
 Of Cœlus, from the universal space,

Thus whisper'd low and solemn in his ear.

‘ O brightest of my children dear, earth-born

‘ And sky-engendered, Son of Mysteries 310

‘ All unrevealed even to the powers

‘ Which met at thy creating ; at whose joys

‘ And palpitations sweet, and pleasures soft,

‘ I, Cœlus, wonder, how they came and whence ;

‘ And at the fruits thereof what shapes they be,

‘ Distinct, and visible ; symbols divine,

‘ Manifestations of that beauteous life

‘ Diffus'd unseen throughout eternal space :

‘ Of these new-form'd art thou, oh brightest child !

‘ Of these, thy brethren and the Goddesses !

‘ There is sad feud among ye, and rebellion

‘ Of son against his sire. I saw him fall,

‘ I saw my first-born tumbled from his throne !

‘ To me his arms were spread, to me his voice

' Found way from forth the thunders round his head !
 ' Pale wox I, and in vapours hid my face.
 ' Art thou, too, near such doom ? vague fear there is :
 ' For I have seen my sons most unlike Gods.
 ' Divine ye were created, and divine
 ' In sad demeanour, solemn, undisturb'd,
 ' Unruffled, like high Gods, ye liv'd and ruled :
 ' Now I behold in you fear, hope, and wrath ;
 ' Actions of rage and passion ; even as
 ' I see them, on the mortal world beneath,
 ' In men who die.—This is the grief, O Son !
 ' Sad sign of ruin, sudden dismay, and fall !
 ' Yet do thou strive ; as thou art capable,
 ' As thou canst move about, an evident God ;
 ' And canst oppose to each malignant hour
 ' Ethereal presence :—I am but a voice ;
 ' My life is but the life of winds and tides,
 ' No more than winds and tides can I avail :—
 ' But thou canst.—Be thou therefore in the van
 ' Of circumstance ; Yea, seize the arrow's barb
 ' Before the tense string murmur.—To the earth !
 ' For there thou wilt find Saturn, and his woes.
 ' Meantime I will keep watch on thy bright sun,
 ' And of thy seasons be a careful nurse.'—
 Ere half this region-whisper had come down,
 Hyperion arose, and on the stars
 Lifted his curved lids, and kept them wide
 Until it ceas'd ; and still he kept them wide :
 And still they were the same bright, patient stars.
 Then with a slow incline of his broad breast,
 Like to a diver in the pearly seas,
 Forward he stoop'd over the airy shore,
 And plung'd all noiseless into the deep night.

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BOOK II

JUST at the self-same beat of Time's wide wings
 Hyperion slid into the rustled air,
 And Saturn gain'd with Thea that sad place
 Where Cybele and the bruised Titans mourn'd.
 It was a den where no insulting light
 Could glimmer on their tears ; where their own groans
 They felt, but heard not, for the solid roar
 Of thunderous waterfalls and torrents hoarse,
 Pouring a constant bulk, uncertain where.
 Crag jutting forth to crag, and rocks that seem'd 10
 Ever as if just rising from a sleep,
 Forehead to forehead held their monstrous horns ;
 And thus in thousand hugest phantasies
 Made a fit roofing to this nest of woe.
 Instead of thrones, hard flint they sat upon,
 Couches of rugged stone, and slaty ridge
 Stubborn'd with iron. All were not assembled :
 Some chain'd in torture, and some wandering.
 Cœus, and Gyges, and Briareüs,
 Typhon, and Dolor, and Porphyrion, 20
 With many more, the brawnies in assault,
 Were pent in regions of laborious breath ;
 Dungeon'd in opaque element, to keep
 Their clenched teeth still clench'd, and all their limbs
 Lock'd up like veins of metal, cramp't and screw'd ;
 Without a motion, save of their big hearts
 Heaving in pain, and horribly convuls'd
 With sanguine feverous boiling surge of pulse.
 Mnemosyne was straying in the world ;
 Far from her moon had Phœbe wandered ; 30
 And many else were free to roam abroad,
 But for the main, here found they covert drear.
 Scarce images of life, one here, one there,

Lay vast and edgeways ; like a dismal cirque
 Of Druid stones, upon a forlorn moor,
 When the chill rain begins at shut of eve,
 In dull November, and their chancel vault,
 The Heaven itself, is blinded throughout night.
 Each one kept shroud, nor to his neighbour gave
 Or word, or look, or action of despair. 40
 Creüs was one ; his ponderous iron mace
 Lay by him, and a shatter'd rib of rock
 Told of his rage, ere he thus sank and pined.
 Iäpetus another ; in his grasp,
 A serpent's splashy neck ; its barbed tongue
 Squeez'd from the gorge, and all its uncurl'd length
 Dead ; and because the creature could not spit
 Its poison in the eyes of conquering Jove.
 Next Cottus : prone he lay, chin uppermost,
 As though in pain ; for still upon the flint 50
 He ground severe his skull, with open mouth
 And eyes at horrid working. Nearest him
 Asia, born of most enormous Caf,
 Who cost her mother Tellus keener pangs,
 Though feminine, than any of her sons :
 More thought than woe was in her dusky face,
 For she was prophesying of her glory ;
 And in her wide imagination stood
 Palm-shaded temples, and high rival fanes,
 By Oxus or in Ganges' sacred isles. 60
 Even as Hope upon her anchor leans,
 So leant she, not so fair, upon a tusk
 Shed from the broadest of her elephants.
 Above her, on a crag's uneasy shelve,
 Upon his elbow rais'd, all prostrate else,
 Shadow'd Enceladus ; once tame and mild
 As grazing ox unworried in the meads ;
 Now tiger-passion'd, lion-thoughted, wroth,

He meditated, plotted, and even now
 Was hurling mountains in that second war,
 Not long delay'd, that scar'd the younger Gods
 To hide themselves in forms of beast and bird.
 Not far hence Atlas ; and beside him prone
 Phorcus, the sire of Gorgons. Neighbour'd close
 Oceanus, and Tethys, in whose lap
 Sobb'd Clymene among her tangled hair.
 In midst of all lay Themis, at the feet
 Of Ops the queen all clouded round from sight ;
 No shape distinguishable, more than when
 Thick night confounds the pine-tops with the clouds : 80
 And many else whose names may not be told.
 For when the Muse's wings are air-ward spread,
 Who shall delay her flight ? And she must chaunt
 Of Saturn, and his guide, who now had climb'd
 With damp and slippery footing from a depth
 More horrid still. Above a sombre cliff
 Their heads appear'd, and up their stature grew
 Till on the level height their steps found ease :
 Then Thea spread abroad her trembling arms
 Upon the precincts of this nest of pain,
 And sidelong fix'd her eye on Saturn's face : 90
 There saw she direst strife ; the supreme God
 At war with all the frailty of grief,
 Of rage, of fear, anxiety, revenge,
 Remorse, spleen, hope, but most of all despair.
 Against these plagues he strove in vain ; for Fate
 Had pour'd a mortal oil upon his head,
 A disanointing poison : so that Thea,
 Affrighted, kept her still, and let him pass
 First onwards in, among the fallen tribe. 100

As with us mortal men, the laden heart
 Is persecuted more, and fever'd more,

When it is nighing to the mournful house
 Where other hearts are sick of the same bruise ;
 So Saturn, as he walk'd into the midst,
 Felt faint, and would have sunk among the rest,
 But that he met Enceladus's eye,
 Whose mightiness, and awe of him, at once
 Came like an inspiration ; and he shouted,
 'Titans, behold your God !' at which some groan'd ; 110
 Some started on their feet ; some also shouted ;
 Some wept, some wail'd, all bow'd with reverence ;
 And Ops, uplifting her black folded veil,
 Show'd her pale cheeks, and all her forehead wan,
 Her eye-brows thin and jet, and hollow eyes.
 There is a roaring in the bleak-grown pines
 When Winter lifts his voice ; there is a noise
 Among immortals when a God gives sign,
 With hushing finger, how he means to load
 His tongue with the full weight of utterless thought, 120
 With thunder, and with music, and with pomp :
 Such noise is like the roar of bleak-grown pines ;
 Which, when it ceases in this mountain'd world,
 No other sound succeeds ; but ceasing here,
 Among these fallen, Saturn's voice therefrom
 Grew up like organ, that begins anew
 Its strain, when other harmonies, stopt short,
 Leave the dinn'd air vibrating silverly.
 Thus grew it up—'Not in my own sad breast,
 'Which is its own great judge and searcher out, 130
 'Can I find reason why ye should be thus :
 'Not in the legends of the first of days,
 'Studied from that old spirit-leaved book
 'Which starry Uranus with finger bright
 'Sav'd from the shores of darkness, when the waves
 'Low-ebb'd still hid it up in shallow gloom ;—
 'And the which book ye know I ever kept

- ' For my firm-based footstool :—Ah, infirm !
 ' Not there, nor in sign, symbol, or portent
 ' Of element, earth, water, air, and fire,— 140
 ' At war, at peace, or inter-quarreling
 ' One against one, or two, or three, or all
 ' Each several one against the other three,
 ' As fire with air loud warring when rain-floods
 ' Drown both, and press them both against earth's face,
 ' Where, finding sulphur, a quadruple wrath
 ' Unhinges the poor world ;—not in that strife,
 ' Wherefrom I take strange lore, and read it deep,
 ' Can I find reason why ye should be thus :
 ' No, no-where can unriddle, though I search, 150
 ' And pore on Nature's universal scroll
 ' Even to swooning, why ye, Divinities,
 ' The first-born of all shap'd and palpable Gods,
 ' Should cower beneath what, in comparison,
 ' Is untremendous might. Yet ye are here,
 ' O'erwhelm'd, and spurned, and batter'd, ye are here !
 ' O Titans, shall I say, " Arise ! "—Ye groan :
 ' Shall I say " Crouch ! "—Ye groan. What can I then ?
 ' O Heaven wide ! O unseen parent dear !
 ' What can I ? Tell me, all ye brethren Gods, 160
 ' How we can war, how engine our great wrath !
 ' O speak your counsel now, for Saturn's ear
 ' Is all a-hunger'd. Thou, Oceanus,
 ' Ponderest high and deep ; and in thy face
 ' I see, astonished, that severe content
 ' Which comes of thought and musing : give us help ! '

So ended Saturn ; and the God of the Sea,
 Sophist and sage, from no Athenian grove,
 But cogitation in his watery shades,
 Arose, with locks not oozy, and began, 170
 In murmurs, which his first-endeavouring tongue

Caught infant-like from the far-foamed sands.

‘ O ye, whom wrath consumes ! who, passion-stung,

‘ Writhe at defeat, and nurse your agonies !

‘ Shut up your senses, stifle up your ears,

‘ My voice is not a bellows unto ire.

‘ Yet listen, ye who will, whilst I bring proof

‘ How ye, perforce, must be content to stoop :

‘ And in the proof much comfort will I give,

‘ If ye will take that comfort in its truth.

‘ We fall by course of Nature’s law, not force

‘ Of thunder, or of Jove. Great Saturn, thou

‘ Hast sifted well the atom-universe ;

‘ But for this reason, that thou art the King,

‘ And only blind from sheer supremacy,

‘ One avenue was shaded from thine eyes,

‘ Through which I wandered to eternal truth.

‘ And first, as thou wast not the first of powers,

‘ So art thou not the last ; it cannot be :

‘ Thou art not the beginning nor the end.

‘ From chaos and parental darkness came

‘ Light, the first fruits of that intestine broil,

‘ That sullen ferment, which for wondrous ends

‘ Was ripening in itself. The ripe hour came,

‘ And with it light, and light, engendering

‘ Upon its own producer, forthwith touch’d

‘ The whole enormous matter into life.

‘ Upon that very hour, our parentage,

‘ The Heavens and the Earth, were manifest :

‘ Then thou first-born, and we the giant-race,

‘ Found ourselves ruling new and beauteous realms.

‘ Now comes the pain of truth, to whom ’tis pain ;

‘ O folly ! for to bear all naked truths,

‘ And to envisage circumstance, all calm,

‘ That is the top of sovereignty. Mark well !

‘ As Heaven and Earth are fairer, fairer far

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- ' Than Chaos and blank Darkness, though once chiefs ;
 ' And as we show beyond that Heaven and Earth
 ' In form and shape compact and beautiful,
 ' In will, in action free, companionship,
 ' And thousand other signs of purer life ;
 ' So on our heels a fresh perfection treads,
 ' A power more strong in beauty, born of us
 ' And fated to excel us, as we pass
 ' In glory that old Darkness : nor are we
 ' Thereby more conquer'd, than by us the rule
 ' Of shapeless Chaos. Say, doth the dull soil
 ' Quarrel with the proud forests it hath fed,
 ' And feedeth still, more comely than itself ?
 ' Can it deny the chiefdom of green groves ?
 ' Or shall the tree be envious of the dove
 ' Because it cooeth, and hath snowy wings
 ' To wander wherewithal and find its joys ?
 ' We are such forest-trees, and our fair boughs
 ' Have bred forth, not pale solitary doves,
 ' But eagles golden-feather'd, who do tower
 ' Above us in their beauty, and must reign
 ' In right thereof ; for 'tis the eternal law
 ' That first in beauty should be first in might :
 ' Yea, by that law, another race may drive
 ' Our conquerors to mourn as we do now.
 ' Have ye beheld the young God of the Seas,
 ' My dispossessor ? Have ye seen his face ?
 ' Have ye beheld his chariot, foam'd along
 ' By noble winged creatures he hath made ?
 ' I saw him on the calmed waters scud,
 ' With such a glow of beauty in his eyes,
 ' That it enforc'd me to bid sad farewell
 ' To all my empire : farewell sad I took,
 ' And hither came, to see how dolorous fate
 ' Had wrought upon ye ; and how I might best

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‘ Give consolation in this woe extreme.
 ‘ Receive the truth, and let it be your balm.’

Whether through poz’d conviction, or disdain,
 They guarded silence, when Oceanus
 Left murmuring, what deepest thought can tell ?
 But so it was, none answer’d for a space,
 Save one whom none regarded, Clymene ;
 And yet she answer’d not, only complain’d,
 With hectic lips, and eyes up-looking mild,
 Thus wording timidly among the fierce :

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‘ O Father, I am here the simplest voice,
 ‘ And all my knowledge is that joy is gone,
 ‘ And this thing woe crept in among our hearts,
 ‘ There to remain forever, as I fear :
 ‘ I would not bode of evil, if I thought
 ‘ So weak a creature could turn off the help
 ‘ Which by just right should come of mighty Gods ;
 ‘ Yet let me tell my sorrow, let me tell
 ‘ Of what I heard, and how it made me weep,
 ‘ And know that we had parted from all hope.
 ‘ I stood upon a shore, a pleasant shore,
 ‘ Where a sweet clime was breathed from a land
 ‘ Of fragrance, quietness, and trees, and flowers.
 ‘ Full of calm joy it was, as I of grief ;
 ‘ Too full of joy and soft delicious warmth ;
 ‘ So that I felt a movement in my heart
 ‘ To chide, and to reproach that solitude
 ‘ With songs of misery, music of our woes ;
 ‘ And sat me down, and took a mouthed shell
 ‘ And murmur’d into it, and made melody—
 ‘ O melody no more ! for while I sang,
 ‘ And with poor skill let pass into the breeze
 ‘ The dull shell’s echo, from a bowery strand
 ‘ Just opposite, an island of the sea,

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' There came enchantment with the shifting wind,
 ' That did both drown and keep alive my ears.
 ' I threw my shell away upon the sand,
 ' And a wave fill'd it, as my sense was fill'd
 ' With that new blissful golden melody. 280
 ' A living death was in each gush of sounds,
 ' Each family of rapturous hurried notes,
 ' That fell, one after one, yet all at once,
 ' Like pearl beads dropping sudden from their string :
 ' And then another, then another strain,
 ' Each like a dove leaving its olive perch,
 ' With music wing'd instead of silent plumes,
 ' To hover round my head, and make me sick
 ' Of joy and grief at once. Grief overcame,
 ' And I was stopping up my frantic ears,
 ' When, past all hindrance of my trembling hands, 290
 ' A voice came sweeter, sweeter than all tune,
 ' And still it cried, " Apollo ! young Apollo !"
 ' " The morning-bright Apollo ! young Apollo !"
 ' I fled, it follow'd me, and cried " Apollo !"
 ' O Father, and O Brethren, had ye felt
 ' Those pains of mine ; O Saturn, hadst thou felt,
 ' Ye would not call this too indulged tongue
 ' Presumptuous, in thus venturing to be heard.'

So far her voice flow'd on, like timorous brook 300
 That, lingering along a pebbled coast,
 Doth fear to meet the sea : but sea it met,
 And shudder'd ; for the overwhelming voice
 Of huge Enceladus swallow'd it in wrath :
 The ponderous syllables, like sullen waves
 In the half-glutted hollows of reef-rocks,
 Came booming thus, while still upon his arm
 He lean'd ; not rising, from supreme contempt.
 ' Or shall we listen to the over-wise,
 ' Or to the over-foolish, Giant-Gods ?

'Not thunderbolt on thunderbolt, till all
 'That rebel Jove's whole armoury were spent,
 'Not world on world upon these shoulders piled,
 'Could agonize me more than baby-words
 'In midst of this dethronement horrible.

'Speak ! roar ! shout ! yell ! ye sleepy Titans all.

'Do ye forget the blows, the buffets vile ?

'Are ye not smitten by a youngling arm ?

'Dost thou forget, sham Monarch of the Waves,

'Thy scalding in the seas ? What, have I rous'd

'Your spleens with so few simple words as these ?

'O joy ! for now I see ye are not lost :

'O joy ! for now I see a thousand eyes

'Wide-glaring for revenge !'—As this he said,

He lifted up his stature vast, and stood,

Still without intermission speaking thus :

'Now ye are flames, I'll tell you how to burn,

'And purge the ether of our enemies ;

'How to feed fierce the crooked stings of fire,

'And singe away the swollen clouds of Jove,

'Stifling that puny essence in its tent.

'O let him feel the evil he hath done ;

'For though I scorn Oceanus's lore,

'Much pain have I for more than loss of realms :

'The days of peace and slumberous calm are fled ;

'Those days, all innocent of scathing war,

'When all the fair Existences of heaven

'Came open-eyed to guess what we would speak :—

'That was before our brows were taught to frown,

'Before our lips knew else but solemn sounds ;

'That was before we knew the winged thing,

'Victory, might be lost, or might be won.

'And be ye mindful that Hyperion,

'Our brightest brother, still is undisgraced—

'Hyperion, lo ! his radiance is here !'

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All eyes were on Enceladus's face,
 And they beheld, while still Hyperion's name
 Flew from his lips up to the vaulted rocks,
 A pallid gleam across his features stern :
 Not savage, for he saw full many a God
 Wroth as himself. He look'd upon them all,
 And in each face he saw a gleam of light,
 But splendider in Saturn's, whose hoar locks
 Shone like the bubbling foam about a keel
 When the prow sweeps into a midnight cove.
 In pale and silver silence they remain'd,
 Till suddenly a splendour, like the morn,
 Pervaded all the beetling gloomy steeps,
 All the sad spaces of oblivion,
 And every gulf, and every chasm old,
 And every height, and every sullen depth,
 Voiceless, or hoarse with loud tormented streams :
 And all the everlasting cataracts,
 And all the headlong torrents far and near,
 Mantled before in darkness and huge shade,
 Now saw the light and made it terrible.
 It was Hyperion :—a granite peak
 His bright feet touch'd, and there he stay'd to view
 The misery his brilliance had betray'd
 To the most hateful seeing of itself.
 Golden his hair of short Numidian curl,
 Regal his shape majestic, a vast shade
 In midst of his own brightness, like the bulk
 Of Memnon's image at the set of sun
 To one who travels from the dusking East :
 Sighs, too, as mournful as that Memnon's harp
 He utter'd, while his hands contemplative
 He press'd together, and in silence stood.
 Despondence seiz'd again the fallen Gods
 At sight of the dejected King of Day,

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And many hid their faces from the light :
 But fierce Enceladus sent forth his eyes
 Among the brotherhood ; and, at their glare,
 Uprose Iäpetus, and Creüs too,
 And Phorcus, sea-born, and together strode
 To where he towered on his eminence.
 There those four shouted forth old Saturn's name ;
 Hyperion from the peak loud answered, ' Saturn ! '
 Saturn sat near the Mother of the Gods,
 In whose face was no joy, though all the Gods 390
 Gave from their hollow throats the name of ' Saturn ! '

BOOK III

THUS in alternate uproar and sad peace,
 Amazed were those Titans utterly.
 O leave them, Muse ! O leave them to their woes ;
 For thou art weak to sing such tumults dire :
 A solitary sorrow best befits
 Thy lips, and antheiming a lonely grief.
 Leave them, O Muse ! for thou anon wilt find
 Many a fallen old Divinity
 Wandering in vain about bewildered shores.
 Meantime touch piously the Delphic harp,
 And not a wind of heaven but will breathe 10
 In aid soft warble from the Dorian flute ;
 For lo ! 'tis for the Father of all verse.
 Flush every thing that hath a vermeil hue,
 Let the rose glow intense and warm the air,
 And let the clouds of even and of morn
 Float in voluptuous fleeces o'er the hills ;
 Let the red wine within the goblet boil,
 Cold as a bubbling well ; let faint-lipp'd shells,
 On sands, or in great deeps, vermillion turn 20
 Through all their labyrinths ; and let the maid

Blush keenly, as with some warm kiss surpris'd.
 Chief isle of the embowered Cyclades,
 Rejoice, O Delos, with thine olives green,
 And poplars, and lawn-shading palms, and beech,
 In which the Zephyr breathes the loudest song,
 And hazels thick, dark-stemm'd beneath the shade :
 Apollo is once more the golden theme !

Where ~~was~~ he, when the Giant of the Sun
 Stood bright, amid the sorrow of his peers ?

Together had he left his mother fair
 And his twin-sister sleeping in their bower,
 And in the morning twilight wandered forth
 Beside the osiers of a rivulet,
 Full ankle-deep in lillies of the vale.

The nightingale had ceas'd, and a few stars
 Were lingering in the heavens, while the thrush
 Began calm-throated. Throughout all the isle
 There was no covert, no retired cave
 Unhaunted by the murmurous noise of waves,

Though scarcely heard in many a green recess.
 He listen'd, and he wept, and his bright tears
 Went trickling down the golden bow he held.
 Thus with half-shut suffused eyes he stood,
 While from beneath some cumbrous boughs hard by
 With solemn step an awful Goddess came,
 And there was purport in her looks for him,
 Which he with eager guess began to read
 Perplex'd, the while melodiously he said :

‘ How cam'st thou over the unfooted sea ? ’

‘ Or hath that antique mien and robed form
 ‘ Mov'd in these vales invisible till now ? ’

‘ Sure I have heard those vestments sweeping o'er
 ‘ The fallen leaves, when I have sat alone
 ‘ In cool mid-forest. Surely I have traced
 ‘ The rustle of those ample skirts about

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'These grassy solitudes, and seen the flowers
 'Lift up their heads, as still the whisper pass'd.
 'Goddess ! I have beheld those eyes before,
 'And their eternal calm, and all that face, 60
 'Or I have dream'd.'—'Yes,' said the supreme shape,
 'Thou hast dream'd of me ; and awaking up
 'Didst find a lyre all golden by thy side,
 'Whose strings touch'd by thy fingers, all the vast
 'Unwearied ear of the whole universe
 'Listen'd in pain and pleasure at the birth
 'Of such new tuneful wonder. Is't not strange
 'That thou shouldst weep, so gifted ? Tell me, youth,
 'What sorrow thou canst feel ; for I am sad
 'When thou dost shed a tear : explain thy griefs 70
 'To one who in this lonely isle hath been
 'The watcher of thy sleep and hours of life,
 'From the young day when first thy infant hand
 'Pluck'd witless the weak flowers, till thine arm
 'Could bend that bow heroic to all times.
 'Show thy heart's secret to an ancient Power
 'Who hath forsaken old and sacred thrones
 'For prophecies of thee, and for the sake
 'Of loveliness new born.'—Apollo then,
 With sudden scrutiny and gloomless eyes, 80
 Thus answer'd, while his white melodious throat
 Throbb'd with the syllables.—'Mnemosyne !
 'Thy name is on my tongue, I know not how ;
 'Why should I tell thee what thou so well seest ?
 'Why should I strive to show what from thy lips
 'Would come no mystery ? For me, dark, dark,
 'And painful vile oblivion seals my eyes :
 'I strive to search wherefore I am so sad,
 'Until a melancholy numbs my limbs ;
 'And then upon the grass I sit, and moan,
 'Like one who once had wings.—O why should I

' Feel curs'd and thwarted, when the liegeless air
 ' Yields to my step aspirant ? why should I
 ' Spurn the green turf as hateful to my feet ?
 ' Goddess benign, point forth some unknown thing :
 ' Are there not other regions than this isle ?
 ' What are the stars ? There is the sun, the sun !
 ' And the most patient brilliance of the moon !
 ' And stars by thousands ! Point me out the way
 ' To any one particular beauteous star, 100
 ' And I will flit into it with my lyre,
 ' And make its silvery splendour pant with bliss.
 ' I have heard the cloudy thunder : Where is power ?
 ' Whose hand, whose essence, what divinity
 ' Makes this alarm in the elements,
 ' While I here idle listen on the shores
 ' In fearless yet in aching ignorance ?
 ' O tell me, lonely Goddess, by thy harp,
 ' That waileth every morn and eventide,
 ' Tell me why thus I rave, about these groves ! 110
 ' Mute thou remainest—Mute ! yet I can read
 ' A wondrous lesson in thy silent face :
 ' Knowledge enormous makes a God of me.
 ' Names, deeds, gray legends, dire events, rebellions,
 ' Majesties, sovran voices, agonies,
 ' Creations and destroyings, all at once
 ' Pour into the wide hollows of my brain,
 ' And deify me, as if some blithe wine
 ' Or bright elixir peerless I had drunk,
 ' And so become immortal.'—Thus the God, 120
 While his enkindled eyes, with level glance
 Beneath his white soft temples, stedfast kept
 Trembling with light upon Mnemosyne.
 Soon wild commotions shook him, and made flush
 All the immortal fairness of his limbs ;
 Most like the struggle at the gate of death ;

Or liker still to one who should take leave
Of pale immortal death, and with a pang
As hot as death's is chill, with fierce convulse
Die into life: so young Apollo anguish'd: 130
His very hair, his golden tresses famed
Kept undulation round his eager neck.
During the pain Mnemosyne upheld
Her arms as one who prophesied.—At length
Apollo shriek'd;—and lo! from all his limbs
Celestial

THE END

POSTHUMOUS POEMS

FRAGMENT OF AN ODE TO MAIA, WRITTEN ON MAY DAY, 1818

MOTHER of Hermes ! and still youthful Maia !

May I sing to thee

As thou wast hymned on the shores of Baiæ ?

Or may I woo thee

In earlier Sicilian ? or thy smiles

Seek as they once were sought, in Grecian isles,
By bards who died content on pleasant sward,

Leaving great verse unto a little clan ?

O, give me their old vigour, and unheard

Save of the quiet Primrose, and the span

Of heaven and few ears,

Rounded by thee, my song should die away

Content as theirs,

Rich in the simple worship of a day.

10

MEG MERRILIES

I

OLD MEG she was a gipsy,

And liv'd upon the Moors :

Her bed it was the brown heath turf,

And her house was out of doors.

II

Her apples were swart blackberries,

Her currants pods o' broom ;

Her wine was dew of the wild white rose,

Her book a churchyard tomb.

III

Her Brothers were the craggy hills,
 Her Sisters larchen trees—
 Alone with her great family
 She liv'd as she did please.

10

IV

No breakfast had she many a morn,
 No dinner many a noon,
 And 'stead of supper she would stare
 Full hard against the Moon.

V

But every morn of woodbine fresh
 She made her garlanding,
 And every night the dark glen Yew
 She wove, and she would sing.

20

VI

And with her fingers old and brown
 She plaited Mats o' Rushes,
 And gave them to the Cottagers
 She met among the Bushes.

VII

Old Meg was brave as Margaret Queen
 And tall as Amazon :
 An old red blanket cloak she wore :
 A chip hat had she on.
 God rest her aged bones somewhere—
 She died full long agone !

30

SONG

I

IN a drear-nighted December,
 Too happy, happy tree,
 Thy branches ne'er remember
 Their green felicity :
 The north cannot undo them,
 With a sleety whistle through them ;
 Nor frozen thawings glue them
 From budding at the prime.

II

In a drear-nighted December,
 Too happy, happy brook,
 Thy bubblings ne'er remember
 Apollo's summer look ;
 But with a sweet forgetting,
 They stay their crystal fretting,
 Never, never petting
 About the frozen time.

10

III

Ah ! would 'twere so with many
 A gentle girl and boy !
 But were there ever any
 Writh'd not at passed joy ?
 To know the change and feel it,
 When there is none to heal it,
 Nor numbed sense to steel it,
 Was never said in rhyme.

20

THE EVE OF SAINT MARK

UPON a Sabbath-day it fell ;
 Twice holy was the Sabbath-bell,
 That called the folk to evening prayer ;
 The city streets were clean and fair
 From wholesome drench of April rains ;
 And, on the western window panes,
 The chilly sunset faintly told
 Of unmatur'd green vallies cold,
 Of the green thorny bloomless hedge,
 Of rivers new with spring-tide sedge,
 Of primroses by shelter'd rills,
 And daisies on the aguish hills.

Twice holy was the Sabbath-bell :
 The silent streets were crowded well
 With staid and pious companies,
 Warm from their fire-side orat'ries ;
 And moving, with demurest air,
 To even-song, and vesper prayer.
 Each arched porch, and entry low,
 Was fill'd with patient folk and slow,
 With whispers hush, and shuffling feet,
 While play'd the organ loud and sweet.

The bells had ceas'd, the prayers begun,
 And Bertha had not yet half done
 A curious volume, patch'd and torn,
 That all day long, from earliest morn,
 Had taken captive her two eyes,
 Among its golden broideries ;
 Perplex'd her with a thousand things,—
 The stars of Heaven, and angels' wings,
 Martyrs in a fiery blaze,
 Azure saints in silver rays.

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20

30

Moses' breastplate, and the seven
 Candlesticks John saw in Heaven,
 The winged Lion of Saint Mark,
 And the Covenantal Ark,
 With its many mysteries,
 Cherubim and golden mice.

Bertha was a maiden fair,
 Dwelling in the old Minster-square ;
 From her fire-side she could see,
 Sidelong, its rich antiquity,
 Far as the Bishop's garden-wall ;
 Where sycamores and elm-trees tall,
 Full-leav'd, the forest had outstript,
 By no sharp north-wind ever nipt,
 So shelter'd by the mighty pile.
 Bertha arose, and read awhile,
 With forehead 'gainst the window-pane.

Again she try'd, and then again,
 Until the dusk eve left her dark
 Upon the legend of St. Mark.
 From plaited lawn-frill, fine and thin,
 She lifted up her soft warm chin,
 With aching neck and swimming eyes,
 And daz'd with saintly imageries.

All was gloom, and silent all,
 Save now and then the still foot-fall
 Of one returning homewards late,
 Past the echoing minster-gate.

The clamorous daws, that all the day
 Above tree-tops and towers play,
 Pair by pair had gone to rest,
 Each in its ancient belfry-nest,
 Where asleep they fall betimes,
 To music of the drowsy chimes.

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60

All was silent, all was gloom,
 Abroad and in the homely room :
 Down she sat, poor cheated soul !
 And struck a lamp from the dismal coal ; 70
 Lean'd forward, with bright drooping hair
 And slant book, full against the glare.
 Her shadow, in uneasy guise,
 Hover'd about, a giant size,
 On ceiling-beam and old oak chair,
 The parrot's cage, and panel square ;
 And the warm angled winter screen,
 On which were many monsters seen,
 Call'd doves of Siam, Lima mice,
 And legless birds of Paradise, 80
 Macaw, and tender Avadavat,
 And silken-furr'd Angora cat.
 Untir'd she read, her shadow still
 Glower'd about, as it would fill
 The room with wildest forms and shades,
 As though some ghostly queen of spades
 Had come to mock behind her back,
 And dance, and ruffle her garments black.
 Untir'd she read the legend page,
 Of holy Mark, from youth to age, 90
 On land, on sea, in pagan chains,
 Rejoicing for his many pains.
 Sometimes the learned eremite,
 With golden star, or dagger bright,
 Referr'd to pious poesies
 Written in smallest crow-quill size
 Beneath the text ; and thus the rhyme
 Was parcell'd out from time to time :
 —— ' Als writh he of svevenis,
 Men han beforne they wake in bliss, 100
 Whanne that hir friendes thinke hem bound
 In crimped shroude farre under grounde ;

And how a litling child mote be
 A saint er its nativitie,
 Gif that the modre (God her blesse !)
 Kepen in solitarinesse,
 And kissen devoute the holy croce.
 Of Goddes love, and Sathan's force,—
 He writhit ; and thinges many mo :
 Of swiche thinges I may not show.
 Bot I must tellen verilie
 Somdel of Saintè Cicilie,
 And chieflie what he auctorethe
 Of Saintè Markis life and dethe :'

110

At length her constant eyelids come
 Upon the fervent martyrdom ;
 Then lastly to his holy shrine,
 Exalt amid the tapers' shine
 At Venice,—

ODE ON INDOLENCE

'They toil not, neither do they spin.'

I

ONE morn before me were three figures seen,
 With bowed necks, and joined hands, side-faced ;
 And one behind the other stepp'd serene,
 In placid sandals, and in white robes graced ;
 They pass'd, like figures on a marble urn,
 When shifted round to see the other side ;
 They came again ; as when the urn once more
 Is shifted round, the first seen shades return ;
 And they were strange to me, as may betide
 With vases, to one deep in Phidian lore.

10

II

How is it, Shadows ! that I knew ye not ?
 How came ye muffled in so hush a mask ?
 Was it a silent deep-disguised plot
 To steal away, and leave without a task
 My idle days ? Ripe was the drowsy hour ;
 The blissful cloud of summer-indolence
 Benumb'd my eyes ; my pulse grew less and less ;
 Pain had no sting, and pleasure's wreath no flower :
 O, why did ye not melt, and leave my sense
 Unhaunted quite of all but—nothingness ?

20

III

A third time pass'd they by, and, passing, turn'd
 Each one the face a moment whiles to me ;
 Then faded, and to follow them I burn'd
 And ach'd for wings because I knew the three ;
 The first was a fair Maid, and Love her name ;
 The second was Ambition, pale of cheek,
 And ever watchful with fatigued eye ;
 The last, whom I love more, the more of blame
 Is heap'd upon her, maiden most unmeek,—
 I knew to be my demon Poesy.

30

IV

They faded, and, forsooth ! I wanted wings :
 O folly ! What is love ! and where is it ?
 And for that poor Ambition ! it springs
 From a man's little heart's short fever-fit ;
 For Poesy !—no,—she has not a joy,—
 At least for me,—so sweet as drowsy noons,
 And evenings steep'd in honied indolence ;
 O, for an age so shelter'd from annoy,
 That I may never know how change the moons,
 Or hear the voice of busy common-sense !

40

V

And once more came they by ;—alas ! wherefore ?
 My sleep had been embroider'd with dim dreams ;
 My soul had been a lawn besprinkled o'er
 With flowers, and stirring shades, and baffled beams :
 The morn was clouded, but no shower fell,
 Tho' in her lids hung the sweet tears of May ;
 The open casement press'd a new-leav'd vine,
 Let in the budding warmth and throstle's lay ;
 O Shadows ! 'twas a time to bid farewell !
 Upon your skirts had fallen no tears of mine.

50

VI

So, ye three Ghosts, adieu ! Ye cannot raise
 My head cool-bedded in the flowery grass ;
 For I would not be dieted with praise,
 A pet-lamb in a sentimental farce !
 Fade softly from my eyes, and be once more
 In masque-like figures on the dreamy urn ;
 Farewell ! I yet have visions for the night,
 And for the day faint visions there is store ;
 Vanish, ye Phantoms ! from my idle spright,
 Into the clouds, and never more return !

60

LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI

O what can ail thee Knight at arms,
 Alone and palely loitering ?

The sedge has withered from the Lake
 And no birds sing !

O what can ail thee Knight at arms,
 So haggard, and so woe-begone ?
 The squirrel's granary is full
 And the harvest 's done.

I see a lilly on thy brow,
 With anguish moist and fever dew,
 And on thy cheek a fading rose
 Fast withereth too—

10

I met a Lady in the Meads
 Full beautiful, a faery's child ;
 Her hair was long, her foot was light,
 And her eyes were wild—

I made a garland for her head,
 And bracelets too, and fragrant Zone ;
 She look'd at me as she did love
 And made sweet moan—

20

I set her on my pacing steed,
 And nothing else saw all day long ;
 For sidelong would she bend and sing
 A faery's song—

She found me roots of relish sweet,
 And honey wild, and manna dew ;
 And sure in language strange she said
 I love thee true—

She took me to her elfin grot,
 And there she wept and sigh'd full sore,
 And there I shut her wild wild eyes
 With kisses four.

30

And there she lulled me asleep,
 And there I dream'd, Ah Woe betide !
 The latest dream I ever dreamt
 On the cold hill side.

I saw pale Kings, and Princes too,
 Pale warriors, death-pale were they all ;
 They cried ' La belle Dame sans merci
 Thee hath in thrall.'

40

I saw their starv'd lips in the gloam
 With horrid warning gaped wide,
 And I awoke, and found me here
 On the cold hill's side.

And this is why I sojourn here
 Alone and palely loitering ;
 Though the sedge is withered from the Lake,
 And no birds sing.

SONNET

ON A PICTURE OF LEANDER

COME hither all sweet maidens soberly,
 Down-looking aye, and with a chasteñ'd light,
 Hid in the fringes of your eyelids white,
 And meekly let your fair hands joined be,
 As if so gentle that ye could not see,
 Untouch'd, a victim of your beauty bright,
 Sinking away to his young spirit's night,—
 Sinking bewilder'd 'mid the dreary sea :
 'Tis young Leander toiling to his death ;
 Nigh swooning, he doth purse his weary lips
 For Hero's cheek, and smiles against her smile.
 O horrid dream ! see how his body dips
 Dead-heavy ; arms and shoulders gleam awhile :
 He 's gone ; up bubbles all his amorous breath !

10

SONNET

ON THE SEA

It keeps eternal whisperings around
 Desolate shores, and with its mighty swell
 Gluts twice ten thousand Caverns, till the spell
 Of Hecate leaves them their old shadowy sound.
 Often 'tis in such gentle temper found,
 That scarcely will the very smallest shell
 Be mov'd for days from where it sometime fell,
 When last the winds of Heaven were unbound.
 Oh ye ! who have your eye-balls vex'd and tir'd,
 Feast them upon the wideness of the Sea ; 10
 Oh ye ! whose ears are dinn'd with uproar rude,
 Or fed too much with cloying melody—
 Sit ye near some old Cavern's Mouth, and brood
 Until ye start, as if the sea-nymphs quir'd !

SONNET

WHEN I have fears that I may cease to be
 Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain,
 Before high-piled books, in charactery,
 Hold like rich garners the full ripen'd grain ;
 When I behold, upon the night's starr'd face,
 Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
 And think that I may never live to trace
 Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance ;
 And when I feel, fair creature of an hour,
 That I shall never look upon thee more,
 Never have relish in the faery power 10
 Of unreflecting love ;—then on the shore
 Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
 Till love and fame to nothingness do sink.

SONNET

THE HUMAN SEASONS

FOUR seasons fill the measure of the year ;
 There are four seasons in the mind of man :
 He has his lusty Spring, when fancy clear
 Takes in all beauty with an easy span :
 He has his Summer, when luxuriously
 Spring's honied cud of youthful thought he loves
 To ruminate, and by such dreaming nigh
 His nearest unto heaven : quiet coves
 His soul has in its Autumn, when his wings
 He furleth close ; contented so to look
 On mists in idleness—to let fair things
 Pass by unheeded as a threshold brook.
 He has his Winter too of pale misfeature,
 Or else he would forego his mortal nature.

10

SONNET

TO HOMER

STANDING aloof in giant ignorance,
 Of thee I hear and of the Cyclades,
 As one who sits ashore and longs perchance
 To visit dolphin-coral in deep seas.
 So thou wast blind ;—but then the veil was rent,
 For Jove uncurtain'd Heaven to let thee live,
 And Neptune made for thee a spumy tent,
 And Pan made sing for thee his forest-hive ;
 Aye on the shores of darkness there is light,
 And precipices show untrodden green,
 There is a budding-morrow in midnight,
 There is a triple sight in blindness keen ;
 Such seeing hadst thou, as it once befel
 To Dian, Queen of Earth, and Heaven, and Hell.

10

SONNET

TO FANNY

I CRY your mercy—pity—love!—aye, love!

Merciful love that tantalizes not,
One-thoughted, never-wandering, guileless love,

Unmask'd, and being seen—without a blot!

O! let me have thee whole,—all—all—be mine!

That shape, that fairness, that sweet minor zest
Of love, your kiss,—those hands, those eyes divine,

That warm, white, lucent, million-pleasured breast,—
Yourself—your soul—in pity give me all,

Withhold no atom's atom or I die,

Or living on perhaps, your wretched thrall,

Forget, in the mist of idle misery,

Life's purposes,—the palate of my mind

Losing its gust, and my ambition blind!

10

SONNET

*Written on a Blank Page in Shakespeare's Poems, facing
'A Lover's Complaint'*

BRIGHT star, would I were stedfast as thou art—

Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night
And watching, with eternal lids apart,

Like nature's patient, sleepless Eremite,
The moving waters at their priestlike task

Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask

Of snow upon the mountains and the moors—
No—yet still stedfast, still unchangeable,

Pillow'd upon my fair love's ripening breast,
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,

Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
And so live ever—or else swoon to death.

10

LETTERS

Leatherhead, November 22, 1817.

My dear Bailey—

... I wish you knew all that I think about Genius and the Heart—and yet I think that you are thoroughly acquainted with my innermost breast in that respect, or you could not have known me even thus long, and still hold me worthy to be your dear Friend. In passing, however, I must say one thing that has pressed upon me lately, and increased my Humility and capability of submission—and that is this truth—Men of Genius are great as certain ethereal Chemicals operating on the Mass of neutral 10 intellect—but they have not any individuality, any determined Character—I would call the top and head of those who have a proper self, Men of Power.

But I am running my head into a subject which I am certain I could not do justice to under five Years' study, and 3 vols. octavo—and, moreover, long to be talking about the Imagination—so my dear Bailey, do not think of this unpleasant affair, if possible do not—I defy any harm to come of it—I defy. I shall write to Cripps this week, and request him to tell me all his goings-on from 20 time to time by Letter wherever I may be. It will go on well—so don't because you have suddenly discovered a Coldness in Haydon suffer yourself to be teased—Do not, my dear fellow—O ! I wish I was as certain of the end of all your troubles as that of your momentary start about the authenticity of the Imagination. I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections, and the truth of Imagination. What the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be Truth—whether it existed before or not,—for I have the same idea of all our passions as of 30 Love : they are all, in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty. In a Word, you may know my favourite specula-

tion by my first Book, and the little Song I sent in my last, which is a representation from the fancy of the probable mode of operating in these Matters. The Imagination may be compared to Adam's dream,—he awoke and found it truth :—I am more zealous in this affair, because I have never yet been able to perceive how anything can be known for truth by consecutive reasoning—and yet it must be. Can it be that even the greatest Philosopher ever arrived at his Goal without putting aside numerous objections ? However it may be, O for a life of Sensations 10 rather than of Thoughts ! It is ' a Vision in the form of Youth,' a shadow of reality to come—and this consideration has further convinced me,—for it has come as auxiliary to another favourite speculation of mine,—that we shall enjoy ourselves hereafter by having what we called happiness on Earth repeated in a finer tone. And yet such a fate can only befall those who delight in Sensation, rather than hunger as you do after Truth. Adam's dream will do here, and seems to be a Conviction that Imagination and its empyreal reflexion, is the same as human life and 20 its spiritual repetition. But, as I was saying, the simple imaginative Mind may have its rewards in the repetition of its own silent Working coming continually on the Spirit with a fine Suddenness. To compare great things with small, have you never, by being surprised with an old Melody, in a delicious place by a delicious voice, *felt* over again your very speculations and surmises at the time it first operated on your soul ? do you not remember forming to yourself the Singer's face—more beautiful than it was possible, and yet, with the elevation of the Moment, you 30 did not think so ? Even then you were mounted on the Wings of Imagination, so high that the prototype must be hereafter—that delicious face you will see. What a time ! I am continually running away from the subject. Sure this cannot be exactly the case with a complex mind

—one that is imaginative, and at the same time careful of its fruits,—who would exist partly on Sensation, partly on thought—to whom it is necessary that ‘years should bring the philosophic Mind’? Such a one I consider yours, and therefore it is necessary to your eternal happiness that you not only drink this old Wine of Heaven, which I shall call the redigestion of our most ethereal Musings upon Earth, but also increase in knowledge, and know all things. I am glad to hear that you are in a fair way for
10 Easter. You will soon get through your unpleasant reading, and then!—but the world is full of troubles, and I have not much reason to think myself pestered with many.

I think Jane or Marianne has a better opinion of me than I deserve; for, really and truly, I do not think my Brother’s illness connected with mine—you know more of the real Cause than they do; nor have I any chance of being rack’d as you have been. You perhaps at one time thought there was such a thing as worldly happiness to be arrived at, at certain periods of time marked out,—
20 you have of necessity from your disposition been thus led away—I scarcely remember counting upon any happiness—I look not for it if it be not in the present hour,—nothing startles me beyond the moment. The Setting Sun will always set me to rights, or if a Sparrow come before my Window, I take part in its existence and pick about the gravel. The first thing that strikes me on hearing a misfortune having befallen another is this—‘Well, it cannot be helped: he will have the pleasure of trying the resources of his Spirit’—and I beg now, my
30 dear Bailey, that hereafter should you observe anything cold in me not to put it to the account of heartlessness, but abstraction—for I assure you I sometimes feel not the influence of a passion or affection during a whole Week—and so long this sometimes continues, I begin to suspect myself, and the genuineness of my feelings at other times—thinking them a few barren Tragedy Tears. . . .

Leatherhead, November 22, 1817.

My dear Reynolds—

... I like this place very much. There is Hill and Dale and a little River. I went up Box hill this Evening after the moon—‘you a’ seen the Moon’—came down, and wrote some lines. Whenever I am separated from you, and not engaged in a continued Poem, every letter shall bring you a lyric—but I am too anxious for you to enjoy the whole to send you a particle. One of the three books I have with me is Shakspeare’s Poems: I never found so many beauties in the Sonnets—they seem to be full of fine things said unintentionally—in the intensity of working ~~10~~ out conceits. Is this to be borne? Hark ye!

When lofty trees I see barren of leaves,
Which erst from heat did canopy the head,
And Summer’s green all girded up in sheaves,
Borne on the bier with white and bristly head.

He has left nothing to say about nothing or anything: for look at snails—you know what he says about Snails—you know when he talks about ‘cockled Snails’—well, in one of these sonnets, he says—the chap slips into—no! I lie! this is in the ‘Venus and Adonis’: the simile ~~20~~ brought it to my Mind.

As the snail, whose tender horns being hit,
Shrinks back into his shelly cave with pain,
And there all smothered up in shade doth sit,
Long after fearing to put forth again;
So at his bloody view her eyes are fled,
Into the deep dark Cabins of her head.

He overwhelms a genuine Lover of poesy with all manner of abuse, talking about—

30
'a poet's rage
And stretched metre of an antique song.'

Which, by the bye, will be a capital motto for my poem, won’t it? ...

Hampstead, January 23, 1818.

My dear Brothers [George and Thomas Keats]—

... Leigh Hunt I showed my 1st Book to—he allows it not much merit as a whole; says it is unnatural and made ten objections to it in the mere skimming over. He says the conversation is unnatural and too high-flown for Brother and Sister—says it should be simple, forgetting do ye mind that they are both overshadowed by a supernatural Power, and of force could not speak like Francesca in the 'Rimini.' He must first prove that Caliban's poetry is unnatural. This with me completely overturns 10 his objections. The fact is he and Shelley are hurt, and perhaps justly, at my not having showed them the affair officiously; and from several hints I have had they appear much disposed to dissect and anatomize any trip or slip I may have made.—But who's afraid? Aye! Tom! Demme if I am. I went last Tuesday, an hour too late, to Hazlitt's Lecture on Poetry, got there just as they were coming out, when all these pounced upon me— Hazlitt, John Hunt and Son, Wells, Bewick, all the Landseers, Bob Harris, aye and more—the Landseers 20 enquired after you particularly—I know not whether Wordsworth has left town—But Sunday I dined with Hazlitt and Haydon, also that I took Haslam with me—I dined with Brown lately. Dilke having taken the Champion Theatricals was obliged to be in town. Fanny has returned to Walthamstow. Mr. Abbey appeared very glum the last time I went to see her, and said in an indirect way that I had no business to be there—Rice has been ill, but has been mending much lately.

I think a little change has taken place in my intellect 30 lately—I cannot bear to be uninterested or unemployed, I, who for so long a time have been addicted to passiveness. Nothing is finer for the purposes of great productions than a very gradual ripening of the intellectual powers. . . .

Teignmouth, April 9, 1818.

My dear Reynolds—

Since you all agree that the thing is bad, it must be so—though I am not aware there is anything like Hunt in it (and if there is, it is my natural way, and I have something in common with Hunt). Look it over again, and examine into the motives, the seeds, from which any one sentence sprung—I have not the slightest feel of humility towards the public—or to anything in existence,—but the eternal Being, the Principle of Beauty, and the Memory of great Men. When I am writing for myself for the mere sake of the moment's enjoyment, perhaps nature has its course with me—but a Preface is written to the Public; a thing I cannot help looking upon as an Enemy, and which I cannot address without feelings of Hostility. If I write a Preface in a supple or subdued style, it will not be in character with me as a public speaker—I would be subdued before my friends, and thank them for subduing me—but among Multitudes of Men—I have no feel of stooping, I hate the idea of humility to them.

I never wrote one single Line of Poetry with the least Shadow of public thought.

Forgive me for vexing you and making a Trojan horse of such a Trifle, both with respect to the matter in Question, and myself—but it eases me to tell you—I could not live without the love of my friends—I would jump down \textcircumflex Etna for any great Public good—but I hate a Mawkish Popularity. I cannot be subdued before them. My glory would be to daunt and dazzle the thousand jabberers about Pictures and Books—I see swarms of Porcupines with their Quills erect 'like lime-twigs set to catch my Winged Book,' and I would fright them away with a torch. You will say my 30 Preface is not much of a Torch. It would have been too insulting 'to begin from Jove,' and I could not set a golden head upon a thing of clay. If there is any fault in the

Preface it is not affectation, but an undersong of disrespect to the Public—if I write another Preface it must be done without a thought of those people—I will think about it. If it should not reach you in four or five days, tell Taylor to publish it without a Preface, and let the Dedication simply stand—‘inscribed to the Memory of Thomas Chatterton.’ ...

Teignmouth, April 27, 1818.

My dear Reynolds—

... I have heard from George, at different times, how slowly you were recovering. It is a tedious thing—but all medical men will tell you how far a very gradual amendment is 10 preferable; you will be strong after this, never fear. We are here still enveloped in clouds—I lay awake last night listening to the Rain, with a sense of being drowned and rotted like a grain of wheat. There is a continual courtesy between the Heavens and the Earth. The heavens rain down their unwelcomeness, and the Earth sends it up again to be returned to-morrow. Tom has taken a fancy to a physician here, Dr. Turton, and, I think, is getting better—therefore I shall perhaps remain here some months. I have written to George for some Books—shall learn 20 Greek, and very likely Italian—and in other ways prepare myself to ask Hazlitt in about a year’s time, the best metaphysical road I can take. For although I take Poetry to be Chief, yet there is something else wanting to one who passes his life among Books and thoughts on Books—I long to feast upon old Homer as we have upon Shakspeare, and as I have lately upon Milton. If you understood Greek, and would read me passages now and then, explaining their meaning, ’twould be, from its mistiness, perhaps, a greater luxury than reading the thing one’s self. I shall 30 be happy when I can do the same for you. I have written for my folio Shakspeare, in which there are the first few stanzas of my ‘Pot of Basil.’ I have the rest here finished, and will copy the whole out fair shortly, and George will bring it you.

Teignmouth, May 3, 1818.

My dear Reynolds—

... We will have some such days upon the heath like that of last summer—and why not with the same book? or what say you to a black-letter Chaucer, printed in 1596: aye, I've got one, huzza! I shall have it bound en gothique—a nice sombre binding—it will go a little way to unmodernize. And also I see no reason, because I have been away this last month, why I should not have a peep at your Spenserian—notwithstanding you speak of your office, in my thought a little too early, for I do not see why a Mind like yours is not capable of harbouring and digesting the whole 10 Mystery of Law as easily as Parson Hugh does pippins, which did not hinder him from his poetic canary. Were I to study Physic or rather Medicine again, I feel it would not make the least difference in my Poetry; when the mind is in its infancy a Bias is in reality a Bias, but when we have acquired more strength, a Bias becomes no Bias. Every department of Knowledge we see excellent and calculated towards a great whole—I am so convinced of this that I am glad at not having given away my medical Books, which I shall again look over to keep alive the 20 little I know thitherwards; and moreover intend through you and Rice to become a sort of pip-civilian. An extensive knowledge is needful to thinking people—it takes away the heat and fever; and helps, by widening speculation, to ease the Burden of the Mystery, a thing which I begin to understand a little, and which weighed upon you in the most gloomy and true sentence in your letter. The difference of high Sensations with and without knowledge appears to me this: in the latter case we are falling continually ten thousand fathoms deep and being blown 30 up again, without wings, and with all [the] horror of a bare-shouldered creature—in the former case, our shoulders are fledged, and we go through the same air and space without fear. . . .

You may perhaps be anxious to know for fact to what sentence in your Letter I allude. You say, 'I fear there is little chance of anything else in this life'—you seem by that to have been going through with a more painful and acute zest the same labyrinth that I have—I have come to the same conclusion thus far. My Branchings out therefrom have been numerous: one of them is the consideration of Wordsworth's genius and as a help, in the manner of gold being the meridian Line of worldly wealth, how he differs from Milton. And here I have nothing but surmises, from an uncertainty whether Milton's apparently less anxiety for Humanity proceeds from his seeing further or not than Wordsworth: and whether Wordsworth has in truth epic passion, and martyrs himself to the human heart, the main region of his song. In regard to his genius alone—we find what he says true as far as we have experienced, and we can judge no further but by larger experience—for axioms in philosophy are not axioms till they are proved upon our pulses. We read fine things, but never feel them to the full until we have gone the same steps as the author.—I know this is not plain; you will know exactly my meaning when I say that now I shall relish Hamlet more than I ever have done. . . . Until we are sick, we understand not; in fine, as Byron says, 'Knowledge is sorrow'; and I go on to say that 'Sorrow is wisdom'—and further for aught we can know for certainty 'Wisdom is folly.' . . .

I will return to Wordsworth—whether or no he has an extended vision or a circumscribed grandeur—whether he is an eagle in his nest or on the wing. And to be more explicit and to show you how tall I stand by the giant, I will put down a simile of human life as far as I now perceive it; that is, to the point to which I say we both have arrived at. Well—I compare human life to a large Mansion of many apartments, two of which I can

only describe, the doors of the rest being as yet shut upon me. The first we step into we call the Infant, or Thoughtless Chamber, in which we remain as long as we do not think. We remain there a long while, and notwithstanding the doors of the second Chamber remain wide open, showing a bright appearance, we care not to hasten to it ; but are at length imperceptibly impelled by the awakening of the thinking principle within us—we no sooner get into the second Chamber, which I shall call the Chamber of Maiden-Thought, than we become intoxicated with the light and ¹⁰ the atmosphere, we see nothing but pleasant wonders, and think of delaying there for ever in delight. However among the effects this breathing is father of is that tremendous one of sharpening one's vision into the heart and nature of Man—of convincing one's nerves that the world is full of Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness, and oppression—whereby this Chamber of Maiden Thought becomes gradually darkened, and at the same time, on all sides of it, many doors are set open—but all dark—all leading to dark passages. We see not the balance of good and evil ; we are ²⁰ in a mist, *we* are now in that state, we feel the ' Burden of the Mystery '. To this point was Wordsworth come, as far as I can conceive, when he wrote ' Tintern Abbey ', and it seems to me that his genius is explorative of those dark Passages. Now if we live, and go on thinking, we too shall explore them. He is a genius and superior to us, in so far as he can, more than we, make discoveries and shed a light in them. Here I must think Wordsworth is deeper than Milton, though I think it has depended more upon the general and gregarious advance of intellect, than individual ³⁰ greatness of Mind. From the *Paradise Lost* and the other Works of Milton, I hope it is not too presuming, even between ourselves, to say, that his Philosophy, human and divine, may be tolerably understood by one not much advanced in years. . . . He did not think into the human

heart as Wordsworth has done. Yet Milton as a Philosopher had sure as great powers as Wordsworth. What is then to be inferred? O many things. It proves there is really a grand march of intellect, it proves that a mighty Providence subdues the mightiest minds to the service of the time being, whether it be in human Knowledge or Religion. . . .

Hampstead, October 9, 1818.

My dear Hessey—

You are very good in sending me the letters from the Chronicle—and I am very bad in not acknowledging such a kindness sooner—pray forgive me. It has so chanced that I have had that paper every day—I have seen to-day's. I cannot but feel indebted to those gentlemen who have taken my part. As for the rest, I begin to get a little acquainted with my own strength and weakness.—Praise or blame has but a momentary effect on the man whose love of beauty in the abstract makes him a severe critique on his own Works. My own domestic criticism has given me pain without comparison beyond what Blackwood or the Quarterly could possibly inflict—and also when I feel I am right, no external praise can give me such a glow as my own solitary reperception and ratification of what is fine. J. S. is perfectly right in regard to the slip-shod Endymion. That it is so is no fault of mine. No!—though it may sound a little paradoxical. It is as good as I had power to make it—by myself. Had I been nervous about its being a perfect piece, and with that view asked advice, and trembled over every page, it would not have been written; for it is not in my nature to fumble—I will write independently.—I have written independently *without Judgment*. I may write independently, and *with Judgment*, hereafter. The Genius of Poetry must work out its own salvation in a man: It

cannot be matured by law and precept, but by sensation and watchfulness in itself. That which is creative must create itself. In 'Endymion,' I leaped headlong into the sea, and thereby have become better acquainted with the Soundings, the quicksands, and the rocks, than if I had stayed upon the green shore, and piped a silly pipe, and took tea and comfortable advice. I was never afraid of failure; for I would sooner fail than not be among the greatest. But I am nigh getting into a rant. So, with remembrances to Taylor and Woodhouse &c. I am

10

• Yours very sincerely
John Keats.

Hampstead, October 14 or 15, 1818.

[*To George and Georgiana Keats*]

... Reynolds has returned from a six weeks' enjoyment in Devonshire—he is well, and persuades me to publish my 'Pot of Basil' as an answer to the attacks made on me in Blackwood's Magazine and the Quarterly Review. There have been two letters in my defence in the Chronicle and one in the Examiner, copied from the Alfred Exeter paper, and written by Reynolds. I don't know who wrote those in the Chronicle—this is a mere matter of the moment 20—I think I shall be among the English Poets after my death. Even as a Matter of present interest the attempt to crush me in the Quarterly has only brought me more into notice, and it is a common expression among book men, 'I wonder the Quarterly should cut its own throat.'

It does me not the least harm in Society to make me appear little and ridiculous: I know when a man is superior to me and give him all due respect—he will be the last to laugh at me and as for the rest I feel that I make an impression upon them which ensures me personal 30 respect while I am in sight whatever they may say when my back is turned. . . .

Notwithstanding your Happiness and your recommendation I hope I shall never marry. Though the most beautiful Creature were waiting for me at the end of a Journey or a Walk ; though the Carpet were of Silk, the Curtains of the morning Clouds ; the chairs and Sofa stuffed with Cygnet's down ; the food Manna, the Wine beyond Claret, the Window opening on Winander mere, I should not feel—or rather my Happiness would not be so fine, as my Solitude is sublime. Then instead of what I have described
10 there is a sublimity to welcome me home. The roaring of the wind is my wife and the Stars through the window pane are my Children. The mighty abstract Idea I have of Beauty in all things stifles the more divided and minute domestic happiness—an amiable wife and sweet Children I contemplate as a part of that Beauty, but I must have a thousand of those beautiful particles to fill up my heart. I feel more and more every day, as my imagination strengthens, that I do not live in this world alone but in a thousand worlds. No sooner am I alone than shapes
20 of epic greatness are stationed around me, and serve my Spirit the office which is equivalent to a King's body-guard —then 'Tragedy with sceptered pall comes sweeping by.' According to my state of mind I am with Achilles shouting in the Trenches, or with Theocritus in the Vales of Sicily. Or I throw my whole being into Troilus, and repeating those lines, 'I wander like a lost Soul upon the Stygian Banks staying for waftage,' I melt into the air with a voluptuousness so delicate that I am content to be alone. These things, combined with the opinion I have
30 of the generality of women—who appear to me as children to whom I would rather give a sugar Plum than my time, form a barrier against Matrimony which I rejoice in.

I have written this that you might see I have my share of the highest pleasures and that though I may choose to pass my days alone I shall be no Solitary. You see there

is nothing spleenical in all this. The only thing that can ever affect me personally for more than one short passing day, is any doubt about my powers for poetry—I seldom have any, and I look with hope to the nighing time when I shall have none. . . .

Hampstead, October 27, 1818.

To Richard Woodhouse.

My dear Woodhouse,

Your letter gave me great satisfaction, more on account of its friendliness than any relish of that matter in it which is accounted so acceptable in the 'genus irritabile.' The best answer I can give you is in a clerklike manner to make some observations on two principal points which seem to 10 point like indices into the midst of the whole pro and con about genius, and views, and achievements, and ambition, et cætera. 1st. As to the poetical character itself (I mean that sort, of which, if I am anything, I am a member; that sort distinguished from the Wordsworthian, or egotistical Sublime; which is a thing *per se*, and stands alone), it is not itself—it has no self—it is every thing and nothing—it has no character—it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated.—It has as much delight in con- 20 ceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous philosopher delights the chameleon poet. It does no harm from its relish of the dark side of things, any more than from its taste for the bright one, because they both end in speculation. A poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence, because he has no Identity—he is continually in for and filling some other body. The Sun,—the Moon,—the Sea, and men and women, who are creatures of impulse, are poetical, and have about them an unchangeable attribute; the poet has none, no identity—he is certainly 30 the most unpoetical of all God's creatures.—If then he has no self, and if I am a poet, where is the wonder that I

should say I would write no more? Might I not at that very instant have been cogitating on the Characters of Saturn and Ops? It is a wretched thing to confess; but it is a very fact, that not one word I ever utter can be taken for granted as an opinion growing out of my identical Nature—how can it, when I have no Nature? When I am in a room with people, if I ever am free from speculating on creations of my own brain, then, not myself goes home to myself, but the identity of every one in the room begins 10 to press upon me, so that I am in a very little time annihilated—not only among men; it would be the same in a nursery of Children. I know not whether I make myself wholly understood: I hope enough so to let you see that no dependence is to be placed on what I said that day.

In the 2d place, I will speak of my views, and of the life I purpose to myself. I am ambitious of doing the world some good: if I should be spared, that may be the work of maturer years—in the interval I will assay to reach to as high a summit in poetry as the nerve bestowed 20 upon me will suffer. The faint conceptions I have of poems to come bring the blood frequently into my forehead. All I hope is, that I may not lose all interest in human affairs—that the solitary Indifference I feel for applause, even from the finest spirits, will not blunt any acuteness of vision I may have. I do not think it will. I feel assured I should write from the mere yearning and fondness I have for the beautiful, even if my night's labours should be burnt every Morning, and no eye ever shine upon them. But even now I am perhaps not speaking from myself, 30 but from some Character in whose soul I now live.

I am sure, however, that this next sentence is from myself—I feel your anxiety, good opinion, and friendship, in the highest degree, and am

Yours most sincerely
John Keats.

Hampstead, February 14, 1819.

To George and Georgiana Keats.

... In my next packet, as this is one by the way, I shall send you my Pot of Basil, St. Agnes' Eve, and if I should have finished it, a little thing called the Eve of St. Mark. You see what fine Mother Radcliffe names I have—it is not my fault—I do not search for them. I have not gone on with Hyperion, for to tell the truth I have not been in great cue for writing lately—I must wait for the spring to rouse me up a little. . . .

Hampstead, February 18, 1819.

... We lead very quiet lives here—Dilke is at present in Greek history and antiquities, and talks of nothing but ¹⁰ the electors of Westminster and the retreat of the ten thousand. I never drink now above three glasses of wine—and never any spirits and water. Though by the bye, the other day Woodhouse took me to his coffee house and ordered a Bottle of Claret—now I like Claret, whenever I can have Claret I must drink it,—'tis the only palate affair that I am at all sensual in. Would it not be a good spec. to send you some vine roots—could it be done? I'll inquire. If you could make some wine like Claret, to drink on summer evenings in an arbour! For really 'tis ²⁰ so fine—it fills one's mouth with a gushing freshness—then goes down cool and feverless—then you do not feel it quarrelling with your liver—no, it is rather a Peacemaker, and lies as quiet as it did in the grape; then it is as fragrant as the Queen Bee, and the more ethereal Part of it mounts into the brain, not assaulting the cerebral apartments like a bully in a bad-house looking for his trull and hurrying from door to door bouncing against the wainscot, but rather walks like Aladdin about his enchanted palace so gently that you do not feel his step. Other wines of ³⁰ a heavy and spirituous nature transform a man into

a Silenus : this makes him a Hermes—and gives a Woman the soul and immortality of an Ariadne, for whom Bacchus always kept a good cellar of claret—and even of that he could never persuade her to take above two cups. I said this same claret is the only palate-passion I have—I forgot game—I must plead guilty to the breast of a Partridge, the back of a hare, the backbone of a grouse, the wing and side of a Pheasant, and a Woodcock *passim*. . . .

Hampstead, March 19, 1819.

... Neither Poetry, nor Ambition, nor Love have any alertness of countenance as they pass by me ; they seem rather like figures on a Greek vase—a Man and two women whom no one but myself could distinguish in their disguise. This is the only happiness, and is a rare instance of the advantage of the body overpowering the Mind. . . .

Hampstead, April 15, 1819.

Last Sunday I took a walk towards Highgate and in the lane that winds by the side of Lord Mansfield's park I met Mr. Green our Demonstrator at Guy's in conversation with Coleridge—I joined them, after enquiring by a look whether it would be agreeable—I walked with him at his alderman-
20 after-dinner pace for near two miles I suppose. In those two Miles he broached a thousand things—let me see if I can give you a list—Nightingales, Poetry—on Poetical Sensation—Metaphysics—Different genera and species of Dreams—Nightmare—a dream accompanied with a sense of touch—single and double touch—a dream related—First and second consciousness—the difference explained between will and Volition—so many metaphysicians from a want of smoking the second consciousness—Monsters—the Kraken—Mermaids—Southey believes in them—Southey's
30 belief too much diluted—a Ghost story—Good morning—I heard his voice as he came towards me—I heard it as he moved away—I had heard it all the interval—if it may

be called so. He was civil enough to ask me to call on him at Highgate. . . .

Winchester, September 20, 1819.

To George and Georgiana Keats.

This day is a grand day for Winchester. They elect the Mayor. It was indeed high time the place should have some sort of excitement. There was nothing going on—all asleep. Not an old maid's sedan returning from a card party ; and if any old women have got tipsy at christenings, they have not exposed themselves in the street. The first night, tho', of our arrival here there was a slight uproar took place at about ten of the clock. We heard distinctly 10 a noise patting down the street, as of a walking-cane of the good old dowager breed ; and a little minute after we heard a less voice observe, 'What a noise the ferril made —it must be loose.' Brown wanted to call the constables, but I observed it was only a little breeze, and would soon pass over. The side streets here are excessively maiden-lady-like, the doorsteps always fresh from the flannel. The knockers have a very staid, serious, nay almost awful quietness about them. I never saw so quiet a collection of lions' and rams' heads. The doors most part black, 20 with a little brass handle just above the keyhole, so that you may easily shut yourself out of your own house. He ! he ! There is none of your Lady Bellaston ringing and rapping here ; no thundering Jupiter-footmen, no operatible tattoos, but a modest lifting up of the knocker by a set of little wee old fingers that peep through the gray mittens, and a dying fall thereof. The great beauty of poetry is that it makes everything, every place, interesting, The palatine Venice and the abbotine Winchester are equally interesting. Some time since I began a poem 30 called 'The Eve of St. Mark,' quite in the spirit of town quietude. I think it will give you the sensation of walking about an old country town in a coolish evening. I know

not whether I shall ever finish it ; I will give it as far as I have gone. . . .

September 21, 1819.

... I am sorry to mix up foolish and serious things together, but in writing so much I am obliged to do so, and I hope sincerely the tenor of your mind will maintain itself better. In the course of a few months I shall be as good an Italian scholar as I am a French one. I am reading Ariosto at present, not managing more than six or eight stanzas at a time. When I have done this language, so as to be able 10 to read it tolerably well, I shall set myself to get complete in Latin, and there my learning must stop. I do not think of venturing upon Greek. I would not go even so far if I were not persuaded of the power the knowledge of any language gives one. The fact is I like to be acquainted with foreign languages. It is, besides, a nice way of filling up intervals, &c. Also the reading of Dante is well worth the while ; and in Latin there is a fund of curious literature of the Middle Ages, the works of many great men—Aretino and Sannazaro and Machiavelli. I shall never become 20 attached to a foreign idiom, so as to put it into my writings. The Paradise Lost, though so fine in itself, is a corruption of our language. It should be kept as it is, unique, a curiosity, a beautiful and grand curiosity, the most remarkable production of the world ; a northern dialect accommodating itself to Greek and Latin inversions and intonations. The purest English, I think—or what ought to be the purest—is Chatterton's. The language had existed long enough to be entirely incorrupted of Chaucer's Gallicisms, and still the old words are used. Chatterton's language is 30 entirely northern. I prefer the native music of it to Milton's, cut by feet. I have but lately stood on my guard against Milton. Life to him would be death to me. Miltonic verse cannot be written, but is the verse of art. I wish to devote myself to another verse alone. . . .

Hampstead, August 1820.

To Percy Bysshe Shelley.

My dear Shelley,

I am very much gratified that you, in a foreign country, and with a mind almost overoccupied, should write to me in the strain of the letter beside me. If I do not take advantage of your invitation, it will be prevented by a circumstance I have very much at heart to prophesy. There is no doubt that an English winter would put an end to me, and do so in a lingering, hateful manner. Therefore, I must either voyage or journey to Italy, as a soldier marches up to a battery. My nerves at present are the worst part of me, yet they feel soothed that, come what ¹⁰ extreme may, I shall not be destined to remain in one spot long enough to take a hatred of any four particular bedposts. I am glad you take any pleasure in my poor poem, which I would willingly take the trouble to unwrite, if possible, did I care so much as I have done about reputation. I received a copy of the *Cenci*, as from yourself, from Hunt. There is only one part of it I am judge of—the poetry and dramatic effect, which by many spirits now-a-days is considered the Mammon. A modern work, it is said, must have a purpose, which may be the God. An artist must serve Mammon; ²⁰ he must have 'self-concentration'—selfishness, perhaps. You, I am sure, will forgive me for sincerely remarking that you might curb your magnanimity, and be more of an artist, and load every rift of your subject with ore. The thought of such discipline must fall like cold chains upon you, who perhaps never sat with your wings furled for six months together. And is not this extraordinary talk for the writer of *Endymion*, whose mind was like a pack of scattered cards? I am picked up and sorted to a pip. My imagination is a monastery, and I am its monk. I am in expectation ³⁰ of *Prometheus* every day. Could I have my own wish effected, you would have it still in manuscript, or be but

now putting an end to the second act. I remember you advising me not to publish my first blights, on Hampstead Heath. I am returning advice upon your hands. Most of the poems in the volume I send you have been written above two years, and would never have been published but for hope of gain ; so you see I am inclined enough to take your advice now. I must express once more my deep sense of your kindness, adding my sincere thanks and respects for Mrs. Shelley. In the hope of soon seeing you,

I remain most sincerely yours,

John Keats.

NOTES

SHELLEY ON KEATS

PAGE 1, l. 2. *Altham*, a story by Charles Ollier, Shelley's publisher. Keats's poem is *Endymion*.

l. 13. For Keats's reply to this, see p. 183.

l. 25. From Gray's *Progress of Poesy*, where it is 'Beneath the good how far—but far above the great'.

PAGE 2, l. 2. *I am aware*, &c. This letter was never sent.

l. 15. *careless despair*. This is a mistake. It is also a mistake that *Hyperion* was stopped by the review in the *Quarterly*: see Letter to Reynolds September 22, 1819.

CHARLES LAMB ON KEATS

PAGE 3, l. 11. *Beauty making beautiful old rhyme*, Shakespeare, *Sonnets*, cvi.

PAGE 4, l. 30. *an ounce of feeling is worth a pound of fancy*, Lamb's modification of Spenser's 'a dram of sweete is worth a pound of sowre', *Faerie Queene*, I. iii. 30.

JEFFREY ON KEATS

PAGE 5, l. 25. *he has copied*. This is saying too much. Keats had read widely in Elizabethan literature, but the verse of *Endymion* is his own.

l. 28. *Theocritus*, pastoral poet, born about 310 B.C. in Sicily. He is the founder and greatest exponent of this style of poetry.

PAGE 6, l. 20. *strangled*, &c.: Milton, *Comus*, l. 729.

PAGE 8, l. 31. *Barry Cornwall*, pen-name of *Bryan Waller Procter* (1787-1874), editor of *Ben Jonson* and writer of a tragedy, *Mirandola*, *English Songs*, and other works.

PAGE 9, ll. 11-12. *Orpheus*, the earliest poet of Greek legend.

Callimachus, grammarian and poet of Alexandria; died c. 240 B.C.

l. 19. *Moschus*, pastoral poet of Syracuse. The lament of Venus was probably by Bion, a pastoral poet of Smyrna, who lived about 280 B.C.

Apuleius, born at Medaura about A.D. 125, wrote *Cupid and Psyche*. There is an English version of it in Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*.

LANDOR ON KEATS

PAGE 11, l. 14. *a Greek*. Keats was much more a child of the Renaissance.

l. 15. *same poem*. Landor is in error: the poem was the 'Hymn to Pan' (pp. 45-7 of this volume).

l. 16. *best verses*, Wordsworth's *Laodamia*.

LEIGH HUNT ON KEATS

PAGE 12, l. 12. *a wilderness, &c.*: Milton, *Paradise Lost*, v. 294.

l. 13. *weeds, &c.*: Spenser, *Muiopotmos*, l. 209.

l. 15. *The pipy hemlock*: see p. 45, l. 241.

PAGE 13, l. 1. *morbidity*. In l. 224, 'Porphyro grew faint.'

PAGE 14, l. 10. Gifford, William (1757-1826) critic and satirist, editor of the *Quarterly*. He reviewed *Endymion* in it, April 1818.

DAVID MASSON ON KEATS

David Masson (1822-1907) held the chair of English at Edinburgh from 1865 to 1895.

PAGE 16, l. 13. *Here is wine, &c.*: *Endymion*, ii. 441-51.

PAGE 17, l. 30. *Above his head, &c.*: *Endymion*, ii. 407-18.

PAGE 20, l. 4. *the so-called Cockney poets*. So called by Lockhart in an article 'On the Cockney School of Poetry' in *Blackwood's Magazine*, October 1817.

PAGE 21, l. 6. *William Browne* of Tavistock (1591-1643?), whose *Britannia's Pastorals* began to appear in 1613.

l. 32. *Infant Chamber*: Letter of May 3, 1818 (see p. 173).

PAGE 22, l. 6. *It seems, &c.* From a note by Byron on his 'Observations upon an Article in Blackwood's Magazine'. The note is dated November 12, 1821. See Byron's *Letters and Journals*, ed. Prothero, vol. iv. p. 491.

SWINBURNE ON KEATS

PAGE 23, l. 16. *Marlowe's*. The reference is to the second sestiad of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*.

l. 17. *Imogen*. See Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, Act II, Sc. 2.

PAGE 25, l. 3. *perfect sonnet*. Presumably that on Chapman's Homer (p. 40).

BRIDGES ON KEATS

PAGE 29, l. 19. *Sidney Colvin*. See his *Keats* (English Men of Letters), p. 104 sqq., and *Life of John Keats*, 1917, p. 229 sqq.

PAGE 31, l. 2. *The journey*: *Endymion*, ii. 276.

l. 3. *solitary thinkings*: *Endymion*, i. 294 (p. 47).

l. 5. *My sleep*: *Ode on Indolence*, st. v. 2 (p. 158).

1. 18. *Those green-rob'd senators* : *Hyperion*, i. 73 (p. 125).
 1. 21. *How tiptoe* : *Endymion*, i. 831.
 1. 32. *the Leander sonnet*. See p. 160.
 PAGE 32, l. 3. *The woes of Troy, &c.* : *Endymion*, ii. 8-10.

PAGE 34. SLEEP AND POETRY

The passage chosen (ll. 85-247) is the most important, though the whole poem repays close study. In lines 85-95 is expressed by means of simile Keats's view of life. Then he turns to poetry and explains its progress in his life—first a life of sensation, then (ll. 122 sqq.) as he looks forward comes the period of reflection on the lot of man. But his words, as he is speaking of the future, do not arise out of experience, so he relates under the guise of a vision, the commencement of the mystical enlightenment which he in common with Wordsworth (*Tintern Abbey*) and other poets possessed ; cf. the Letter of Keats to Reynolds, *infra*, p. 173, and *Endymion*, i. 777, 'Wherein lies happiness,' &c.

1. 89. *Montmorenci*, a river in Canada which joins St. Lawrence eight miles below Quebec. Near its mouth is a cataract ('the monstrous steep') 250 feet high.

1. 186. *They sway'd*, &c., i. e. the eighteenth-century poets who wrote the heroic couplet in such a way that the second line monotonously balanced the first.

1. 198. *certain*, because the effects were sure. See *Genesis* xxx. 37 sqq.

1. 202. *the bright Lyrist*, Apollo.

1. 206. *Boileau*! French critic, whose *L'Art Poétique*, 1674, stated the doctrines of the 'classical' school of poetry.

1. 209. *boundly*, coined by Keats, meaning apparently 'bounden'.

1. 214. *Avon*, on which stands Stratford, Shakespeare's birthplace.

1. 234. 'The poets are so many Polyphemus.' Polyphemus, a giant blinded by Ulysses, threw not clubs but rocks into the sea as Ulysses was escaping (*Odyssey*, ix).

PAGE 39. I STOOD TIPTOE

In a letter to Charles Cowden Clarke, December 17, 1816, Keats says 'I have done little to *Endymion* lately—I hope to finish it in one more attack'. This is the poem published without a title in 1817 and now known by its first words 'I stood tiptoe'.

PAGE 40. ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S HOMER.

Keats and Cowden Clarke had been reading Chapman's Homer overnight, some time in October 1816, and early the following morning Keats sent to his friend this sonnet—on the

whole his finest, and one of the finest in English. It has been pointed out that historical accuracy requires 'Balboa' instead of 'Cortez'. Balboa discovered the Pacific in 1513. Cortez (1485-1547) was the conqueror of Mexico.

PAGE 42.

ENDYMION

The extracts from the beginning of Book I give first Keats's enumeration of various manifestations of beauty and his reasons for choosing the myth of Endymion.

1. 25. *essences*, separate existences.

1. 35. *Endymion*, a youth said to have come from Elis to Mount Latmus in Caria—hence the name of Latmian which was given him. As he was asleep on Latmus his beauty attracted the moon, who came down and kissed him.

1. 39. *begin*. The poem was commenced in spring (probably April 17) 1816 at Carisbrooke.

1. 206. *Triton*, son of Poseidon and Amphitrite, often represented as riding over the sea on sea-horses. The line recalls Wordsworth's 'And hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn'.

1. 213. *Pan*. The god of flocks and herds, son of Hermes and Dryope, said to have loved the nymph Syrinx (l. 243), named also Lycaean because he had a sanctuary on Mount Lycaeum (l. 306). He was dreaded by travellers, causing panic, and this, as also the fact that he was considered the god of mysteries and of the universe, is referred to in ll. 285-9, 293-302.

1. 223. *spire*, apparently wrongly used for pyramid.

1. 256. *chuckling*. 'The nestling linnet retained the call of its own species, or what the bird-catchers call the linnet's chuckle, from some resemblance to that word when pronounced' (quoted in the *New English Dictionary* from Barrington's *Singing of Birds*, 1733).

1. 318. *Thermopylae*, a narrow pass on the border of Thessaly defended to the death 480 B. C. against the Persians under Xerxes by Leonidas and his 300 Spartans.

PAGE 48. Book IV. The passage given is the song of the Indian lady by whom Endymion is withdrawn for a time from ideal to material love. In the end he finds the two identical.

1. 155. *falcon-eye*, i. e. an eye as bright as a falcon's, a lover's.

1. 158. *spyry*, an old form of spray.

ll. 167-72. A lover would not injure a flower symbolic of sorrow—because lovers know sorrow full well. He ought not, therefore, to be harshly treated and deprived of the joy of life. It is like the merriment of May, deprived of light-heartedness.

1. 176. *cheerly*, here a cry of encouragement.

1. 210. *trifling*, playing with; a rare use.

1. 215. *Silenus*, foster-father of Bacchus, often represented as drunk and riding an ass.

1. 247. *coil*, bustle.

1. 257. *Osirian*, because Osiris was worshipped there.
 1. 261. *whelming vintage*, conquering wine.
 1. 265. *Brahma*, an Indian deity, the Creator of the Universe ; with him is associated Vishnu its sustainer and Shiva its destroyer.

PAGE 54.

LAMIA

The following note was given by Keats at the end of the poem :

' Philostratus, in his fourth book *de Vita Apollonii*, hath a memorable instance in this kind, which I may not omit, of one Menippus Lycius, a young man twenty-five years of age, that going betwixt Cenchreas and Corinth, met such a phantasm in the habit of a fair gentlewoman, which, taking him by the hand, carried him home to her house, in the suburbs of Corinth, and told him she was a Phoenician by birth, and if he would tarry with her, he should hear her sing and play, and drink such wine as never any drank, and no man should molest him ; but she, being fair and lovely, would live and die with him, that was fair and lovely to behold. The young man, a philosopher, otherwise staid and discreet, able to moderate his passions, though not this of love, tarried with her a while to his great content, and at last married her, to whose wedding, amongst other guests, came Apollonius ; who, by some probable conjectures, found her out to be a serpent, a lamia ; and that all her furniture was, like Tantalus' gold, described by Homer, no substance but mere illusions. When she saw herself descried, she wept, and desired Apollonius to be silent, but he would not be moved, and thereupon she, plate, house, and all that was in it, vanished in an instant : many thousands took notice of this fact, for it was done in the midst of Greece.' Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Part 3, Sect. 2, Memb. 1, Subs. 1.

1. 3. *Oberon*. The fairy king, first mentioned in the French romance *Huon de Bordeaux*, a son of Julius Caesar and Morgan le Fay.

1. 7. *ever-smitten*, constantly falling in love ; it is to be feared that this is one of Keats's lapses. *Hermes* was the messenger of the gods, carrying the Caduceus, a rod entwined by two serpents (cf. 1. 89).

1. 36. *gentle heart*. Cf. Chaucer ' Pitee renneth soone in gentil herte ' Knight's Tale, l. 903 and Squire's Tale, l. 479.

1. 46. *cirque-couchant*, lying in circular folds.

1. 58. *Ariadne's tiar*. Ariadne, daughter of Minos of Crete, married Dionysus who placed among the stars the crown which he gave her.

1. 63. *Sicilian air*. Proserpine was carried off by Pluto to the nether world while gathering flowers in Sicily.

- l. 78. *Phoebean dart*, sunbeam.
- l. 81. *star of Lethe*, Hermes, so called as guide of the dead to their nether abode, beyond the river Lethe. See p. 4, l. 12.
- l. 103. *Silenus*, see note on p. 50, l. 215.
- l. 114. *psalterian*, psalm-like; coined by Keats.
- l. 115. *Circean*. Circe was the sorceress who enchanted the followers of Ulysses. Cf. Milton, *Comus*, ll. 46-54.
- l. 133. *Caducean*. See note on l. 7. Keats endows the Caduceus with magical power, following perhaps Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, II. xii. 41.
- l. 155. *volcanian yellow*, the colour of the sulphur found on a volcano.
- l. 158. *brede*, here 'marking'.
- ll. 174-6. *Cenchreas' shore*. Cenchreæ (Keats's Cenchreas) was a town on the Isthmus of Corinth. The Peræan hills are about nine miles north of Corinth.
- l. 179. *Cleone*, a town about eight miles south-west of Corinth on the road to Argos.
- ll. 191-2. *Sciential*, of sufficient knowledge to disentangle.
- l. 198. *unshent*, without reproach.
- l. 211. *palatine*, belonging to a palace, then splendid.
- l. 212. *Mulciber*, Vulcan.
piazzian, in rows like a piazza, or covered walk.
- l. 235. *phantasy*, &c., his reverie was lost where reasoning disappears in the calm speculation of Plato's philosophy.
- l. 267. *spheres*. According to Pythagoras the heavenly bodies by their movements produced a music imperceptible to human ears.
- l. 275. *nice*, accurate.
- l. 279. *scholar*, one who has knowledge of the world of spirits: cf. *Hamlet*, I. i. 43, 'Thou art a scholar; speak to it, Horatio.'
- l. 320. *Adonian*. The festivals of Adonis (Adonia) were held annually, when bowers of plants in flower were placed near the statue. Adonis was a beautiful youth beloved by Venus, and killed by a boar.
- l. 329. *Peris*, in Persian mythology good angels or fairies.
- ll. 330-3. One of Keats's lapses from good taste.
- l. 333. *Pyrrha*, wife of Deucalion. After the flood, Pyrrha and Deucalion cast stones behind them: from those cast by Pyrrha sprang women; from those cast by Deucalion, men.
- l. 347. *comprized*, wrapped up in.
- l. 352. *lewd*, because of the immorality practised in the temples.
- l. 390. *Persian mutes*. In eastern countries the mute was usually not a naturally dumb person, but one who had been deprived of speech.
- l. 394. *flutter-winged*. Keats uses this in a derogatory sense

of his verse as opposed to strong-winged. No doubt he had observed the flight of the flutter-mouse or bat.

PAGE 65. PART II. l. 12. *of*, for, on their behalf.

l. 16. *For all this*, in spite of all this.

l. 79. *Apollo's presence*, a periphrase for Apollo. He slew the serpent (Python) which had tormented his mother Latona before his birth.

l. 80. Mark the tragic irony of this line.

l. 145. *dreadful*, dreaded by her.

l. 155. *demesne*, used here for palace; usually land, district.

l. 160. *daft*, resisted, baffled; 'daff' is a form of 'doff', to put off.

l. 187. *Ceres' horn*, the cornucopia or horn of plenty. Ceres is the goddess of harvest. Cf. *The Fall of Hyperion*, i. 35-6:

Still was more plenty than the fabled horn

Thrice emptied could pour forth at banqueting.

l. 224. *adder's tongue*, a fern (*Ophioglossum vulgatum*) which gets its name from the shape of its fruiting spike.

l. 225. *thyrsus*, the rod of Bacchus, here symbolic of the deadening effect of wine.

ll. 229-33. Buxton Forman quotes from the *Autobiography of Haydon* (ed. Tom Taylor, 1855, vol. i, p. 354) that 'Keats and Lamb, at one of their meetings at Haydon's house, agreed that Newton "had destroyed all the poetry of the rainbow, by reducing it to the prismatic colours".' What Keats is saying here is what Hamlet says 'There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy, Horatio'. At the moment these lines incline the reader to pity Lamia and to forget her serpent-nature.

l. 275. *deep-recessed vision*, sunken eyes.

l. 277. *juggling*. The idea is that Apollonius like a magician had power of affecting by the evil eye.

l. 279. *the gods*. See l. 190.

l. 301. *perceant*, piercing. Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, I. x. 47. 'Yet wondrous quick and persaunt was his spright.'

PAGE 75.

ISABELLA

Isabella was begun early in 1818 and finished at Teignmouth in the spring of that year. The source is the fifth novel of the fourth day of Boccaccio's *Decameron* (see l. 145), and Keats follows it pretty closely. The tale in Boccaccio is matter of fact and shows no trace of the romance in which Keats envelopes it. The poem should be compared with *Lamia* as illustrating two kinds of narrative. The metre is the Italian *ottava rima* used by the Elizabethan translators of Ariosto and Tasso, by Drayton, and by Byron in *Don Juan*.

l. 2. *palmer*, properly a pilgrim to the Holy Land who had brought back a palm; here a pilgrim to the shrine of Love.

1. 21. *vespers*, evening prayers, not to be confounded with *vespers* as a church service.
1. 64. *shrive*, used here of making confession, usually of giving absolution.
1. 91. *in fee*, as their absolute possession.
1. 95. *spouse*, Ariadne, left deserted by Theseus on the isle of Naxos.
1. 99. *under-grove*, a grove in the underworld.
1. 107. *hand*, workman.
swelt, faint with heat.
1. 109. *proud-quiver'd*, proudly equipped with quivers. The hyphen here has no manuscript support. Forman takes the sense to be 'many loins once proud now quivered (i.e. used in the sense of quivering)'.
1. 113. *Ceylon*. The accent at this time was on the first syllable, as in Dryden's *Annus Mirabilis*, stanza 3, and in Heber's hymn 'Blow soft o'er Ceylon's isle'.
1. 124. *lazar stairs*, stairs at which lepers sat and begged.
1. 128. This line is one of Keats's lapses.
1. 131. *close*, niggard..
land inspired, the Holy Land, Palestine.
1. 133. As hawks in forests so did the brothers prey on the ships with their forest of masts in harbour.
1. 140. *Egypt's pest*, the sand of the desert.
1. 150. *ghittern*, an instrument of the guitar family which became obsolete about 1700. It was like the cithern, but smaller and strung with gut instead of wire.
1. 209. *murder'd*, anticipatory use of the word to gain vividness and vigour.
1. 212. *bream*, a fresh-water fish found in lakes or the deep pools of rivers. In no case is this consistent with *freshet*, which is either a small stream or a flood.
1. 262. *Hinnom's vale*. Cf. 2 Kings xxiii. 10.
1. 307. *mass*, used loosely here (as often by writers not familiar with Roman Catholic services) for some Church office. Mass is sung only by a priest. It has been suggested that Keats was thinking of the Angelus (cf. ll. 309-10); but the suggestion is not convincing.
1. 322. *atom darkness*, explained by what follows. The sensation has perhaps never been so vividly described.
1. 344. *forest-hearse*. The trees symbolize the nodding plumes which used commonly to be seen on a hearse.
1. 356. *stole*, here 'shroud'.
1. 389. *the old tale*, the story as told by Boccaccio.
1. 393. *Persean*, of Perseus, who cut off the Gorgon's head.
1. 416. *Basil*, the name of an aromatic plant of shrubby growth. The Greek name was *βασιλικόν* (kingly), because the plant was thought to be used in making royal perfume; when

the Greek title was turned into Latin *basilicum*, it became connected with basiliscus (basilisk) and was thought of as a specific against a serpent bite.

- l. 432. *leafits*, little leaves. The word seems obsolete now.
- l. 442. *Melpomene*, the muse of tragedy.
- l. 451. *Baalites*, money was the Baal or false god which they worshipped.
- l. 453. *elf*, 'person' here. Usually a fairy.
- l. 467. *chapel-shrift*, confession.

PAGE 93. THE EVE OF ST. AGNES

This poem was commenced at Chichester in January 1819, finished in February at Hampstead, and revised in September at Winchester. The spirit of romance breeds over the poem. Keats never created such an atmosphere as he has done here, nor has the Spenserian stanza, except by its inventor, ever been used with such mastery. The colour with which the poem is shot through is of astounding beauty.

St. Agnes' Eve is January 20, her festival January 21. She was a Roman maiden martyred in her fourteenth year in A.D. 306. On the anniversary of the festival it was customary to offer two lambs; these having been accepted by the priest were kept till shearing time and then their fleece was used for weaving the palls sent by the Pope to archbishops. On her eve many practices were resorted to by maidens in order to divine who their husbands should be.

l. 5. *Beadsman*, a man who says prayers, from the O.E. *gebed*. If many set prayers were to be said, some help to memory was needed. For this purpose small bits of ivory or some such substance strung together were employed which from their use were called beads. To these the fanciful name 'rosary' was given, from the Latin *rosarium*, or rose-garden.

ll. 14-18. Note the effect of cold in these lines; *dumb* because the oratories never re-echo to the sound of the prayers uttered by the knights and ladies in the canopied tombs.

l. 44. *wing'd*, a mistake. St. Agnes is sometimes represented in Art with an angel beside her.

l. 171. The exact form of the legend used here by Keats has not been found. The story is that Merlin was the offspring of an evil spirit and a mortal mother. He paid the 'monstrous debt' when he yielded up his life, imprisoned by the enchantment wrought upon him by Nimue.

l. 174. *tambour frame*, an embroidery frame shaped like a drum.

l. 193. *mission'd*, i.e. with a commission to help.

l. 207. *her*. It is the male nightingale which sings. In the previous line *tongueless* is equivalent to 'songless'. Keats may have had the story of Philomela in mind, but though she

was tongueless when she was changed into a nightingale, there is no mention that after this transformation she was still so afflicted.

1. 214. *heraldries*, heraldic devices. 'Heraldries' and 'emblazonings' are much the same, and 'a shielded scutcheon'—in itself tautologous—repeats the meaning of the previous words.

1. 218. *gules*, the heraldic name for red.

1. 241. *clasp'd*, i. e. shut, for a mass-book would not be used in pagan lands.

1. 251. Carpets were not used in the Middle Ages for covering floors except in ladies' chambers, though a table might be covered with one (ll. 255 and 285).

1. 257. *Morphean*. Morpheus was the god of sleep.

1. 263. *lavender'd*, i. e. perfumed with lavender.

1. 266. *soother*, smoother, more soothing; coined by Keats.

1. 268. *argosy*, originally a ship of Ragusa in Dalmatia; used poetically for a ship with a precious cargo.

1. 292. *La belle dame*, a poem by Alain Chartier (1386-1458), secretary to Charles VII of France, and court poet. Keats knew the English translation by Sir Richard Ros, which used to be printed among the works of Chaucer.

1. 322. *solution*, a blending. This appears as if it were a reminiscence of Keats's days as a medical student. Cf. also *Endymion*, Bk. IV, 667, 'warm with dew from living blood,' and *Ode to Fanny*, I, 'Physician Nature! let my spirit blood!'

1. 333. *unpruned*, untrimmed. In this sense 'preen' is usual.

1. 349. *Rhenish*, Rhine wine.

mead, a heavy drink made with honey and fermented.

1. 351. *For o'er the southern moors*. Keats had written 'Over the Dartmoor bleak' here, a reading full of interest as hinting to us the locality he had in mind.

1. 355. *darkling*, dark, obscure, strictly an adverb 'in the dark'; cf. *Ode to a Nightingale*, l. 51.

1. 362. *iron*, used of the porch because its gate was iron-bound.

ll. 370-1. Two wonderful lines. The conclusion of the whole matter: *Amor vincit omnia*.

1. 377. *aves*. In the rosary each of the small beads requires the saying of an *Ave Maria* ('Hail Mary') and each of the large ones, a *Pater Noster* (the Lord's Prayer).

PAGE 107. ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE

1. 3. *drains*, dregs.

1. 14. *Provencal*. Provence in Southern France was the home of the troubadours of mediaeval times.

1. 16. *Hippocrene*, the fountain sacred to the Muses on Mount Helicon.

1. 26. The poet's brother Tom was perhaps in his mind when he wrote this.

ll. 69-70. In these famous lines Keats originally wrote: 'the wide' casements, 'keelless' seas, and 'fairy' for 'faery'.

PAGE 110. ODE ON A GRECIAN URN

1. 1. *unravish'd*, because the secret of the urn—which the poet in the ode discloses—had not yet been given up. It is almost impossible to give an intelligible sense to individual words as here used, but the idea is that the urn, wedded to quiet, and brought up by silence and time (which is slow so far as the urn is concerned), although it neither does nor suffers anything, still is the means of communicating a message.

1. 7. *Tempe*, a valley in Thessaly.

Arcady, Arcadia in the centre of the Peloponnesus.

1. 28. *breathing*, living. Keats's own fate is prophetically set forth in the next two lines.

1. 41. *Attic*, equivalent to Greek here. Athens was the chief town of Attica and so the latter is representative of Greek culture.

brede, embroidery.

1. 44. *tease*, a word much affected by Keats, but not always used as happily as here.

ll. 49-50. Keats's expression of faith. In two lines the poet sums up the speculation of many philosophers. Cf. 'What the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be Truth' (Letter to Bailey, November 22, 1817: see p. 164).

PAGE 112. ODE TO PSYCHE

'The following poem is the first and the only one with which I have taken even moderate pains. I have for the most part dash'd off my lines in a hurry. This I have done leisurely—I think it reads the more richly for it. . . . You must recollect that Psyche was not embodied as a goddess before the time of Apuleius the Platonist, who lived after the Augustan age, and consequently the goddess was never worshipped or sacrificed to with any of the ancient fervour.'—Letter to George and Georgiana Keats, April 30, 1819. See note on p. 7, l. 12.

1. 2. *By sweet enforcement*, &c.: an echo of *Lycidas*, l. 6, 'Bitter constraint, and sad occasion dear'.

1. 14. *Tyrian*, purple. Tyre was famous for the purple dye made from the murex.

1. 25. *Olympus*, a mountain in Thessaly, the dwelling of the gods of classical mythology.

1. 26. *Phoebe*, the moon goddess.
star, orb, here the moon.
1. 35. *dreaming*, under the influence of inspiration.
1. 37. *fond*, &c. : credulous lyric poets of the pagan world.
1. 41. *lucent fans*, brilliantly transparent wings. She is represented with the wings of a butterfly.
1. 55. Cf. Letter to T. Keats, June 29, 1818. 'There is no great body of water . . . it oozes out from a cleft in perpendicular Rocks all fledged with ash and other beautiful trees.'

PAGE 114.

FANCY

This poem was sent in a letter (January 2, 1819) to George and Georgiana Keats, and was revised and slightly shortened for publication in 1820. The poem, in octosyllabics, should be compared with Milton's *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*.

1. 55. *field-mouse*, apparently an error for dormouse.
11. 81-2. *Ceres' daughter*, Proserpine, the wife of Pluto, king of the nether world, *the God of Torment*.
1. 85. *Hebe*, the cup-bearer of the gods before Ganymede.

PAGE 117. BARDS OF PASSION AND OF MIRTH

This poem was written in a blank page of Keats's copy of Beaumont and Fletcher at the beginning of Fletcher's *Fair Maid of the Inn*, and seems addressed to both these poets. A copy was given in the letter to George and Georgiana Keats of January 2, 1819, when it is said to be 'on the double immortality of Poets'.

PAGE 118. LINES ON THE MERMAID TAVERN

This poem was included in Keats's letter to Reynolds of February 3, 1818, and was afterwards revised for publication. It was suggested by Beaumont's verse *Letter to Ben Jonson* which speaks of 'their merry meetings at the Mermaid'—the famous meeting-place of the literary men of Shakespeare's era, situated in Bread Street.

1. 12. *bowse*, drink.

PAGE 119.

ROBIN HOOD

J. H. Reynolds had written two sonnets on Robin Hood which he had sent to Keats. In reply (letter, February 3, 1818) Keats makes some criticisms on the sonnets and on Wordsworth and says: 'I will have no more of Wordsworth or Hunt in particular. . . . I don't mean to deny Wordsworth's grandeur and Hunt's merit, but I mean to say we need not be teased with grandeur and merit when we can have them uncontaminated and unobtrusive. Let us have the old Poets and Robin Hood.' Then follows the poem.

1. 13. *ivory*, an ivory horn.
1. 33. *morris*, morris dance. 'In the English morris dance there figured at one time or another a Negro or Moor, a hobby horse, dragons, Robin Hood, Friar Tuck, Little John, and Maid Marian' (*Shakespeare's England*, ii. 438).
1. 34. *Gamelyn*, the hero of *The Tale of Gamelyn*, a fourteenth-century poem once supposed to be Chaucer's.
1. 36. *shawe*, wood.
1. 44. *dockyard strokes*, in Keats's time the need of timber to supply the wants of the navy depleted the woods of England.

PAGE 121.

TO AUTUMN

'How beautiful the Season is now—How fine the air—a temperate sharpness about it. Really, without joking, chaste weather—Dian skies—I never liked stubble-field so much as now—Aye better than the chilly green of the Spring. Somehow, a stubble-field looks warm—in the same way that some pictures look warm. This struck me so much in my Sunday's walk that I composed upon it.'—Letter to Reynolds from Winchester, September 22, 1819.

1. 28. *swallows*, low-growing willows.

PAGE 122.

ODE ON MELANCHOLY

The abrupt commencement is accounted for by the omission of the original first verse which ended :

. . . Certes you would fail
To find the Melancholy—whether she
Dreameth in any isle of Lethe dull.

Keats says that melancholy is not to be connected with horror or sorrow, but with beauty.

1. 1. *Lethe*, 'forgetfulness': a river of the nether world.
1. 4. *nightshade*. The nightshade with red berries is not the deadly kind. *Proserpine*: see note on p. 116, ll. 81-2.
1. 6. *beetle*, probably the 'death-tick', so called from the noise it makes, a beetle which is found in walls and woodwork.
- death-moth*, death's-head moth.
1. 16. *rainbow*, the rainbow colours sometimes seen on the damp sand of the sea-beach when touched with sunlight.

1. 21. *She*, Melancholy.

PAGE 123.

HYPERION

'I consider the fragment of *Hyperion* as second to nothing that was ever produced by a writer of the same years.' So Shelley writes in the Preface to *Adonais*, and in a letter to Marianne Hunt, November 11, 1820, he says 'Keats's new volume has arrived to us, and the fragment called "Hyperion" promises for him that he is destined to become one of the

first writers of the age'. In writing to Peacock, February 15, 1821, he says: 'Among your anathemas of the modern attempts in poetry, do you include Keats's "Hyperion"? I think it very fine. His other poems are worth little; but if the "Hyperion" be not grand poetry, none has been produced by our contemporaries.' Like *Endymion*, *Hyperion* is merely a subject. The name in each case was Greek, but the poems are not treatments of Greek legend; they are rather inventions of the poet. The thread of the story is slight. Saturn and all the older gods with the exception of Hyperion have been dethroned by the new gods, and Hyperion is to be superseded by Apollo.

The mythology of *Hyperion* is Keats's own though founded on his reading. It seems impossible to make it entirely coherent. The giants and Titans are confused. Coelus (Heaven), otherwise Uranus, was father of Titan, Saturn, Gyges, Cottus, Briareus, Coeus, Thea, Porphyryion, Oceanus, Mnemosyne, Hyperion by Terra (Earth), of whom Tellus is another name. Titan is also a generic name for the children of Coelus. Saturnus was father of Neptunus by Ops or Cybele. Clymene and Asia, daughters of Oceanus and Tethys, married Iapetus who had a son by Asia named Atlas. Caf, for Caucasus, is a deity invented by Keats as the mother of Asia. For the name, see Byron, *English Bards*, 1022, and *Don Juan*, c. vi. st. 86, and Burton, *Arabian Nights*, i. 72, 78, and 133. Elsewhere Caf is described as a range of hills which encircle the earth.

ll. 1-21. These opening lines are extraordinarily felicitous in expressing the loneliness, the quiet, the hopelessness of the situation. In l. 19 the epithet 'realmless' is superb; it displaced two previous attempts 'ancient' and 'white brow'd'.

l. 30. *Ixion*, king of Thessaly, bound to a constantly revolving wheel in Hell on account of his attempt on Juno.

l. 86. *cathedral cavern*, a reminiscence of his visit to Staffa in July 1818.

l. 94. *horrid*, with the sense of Latin *horridus*, bristling.

l. 129. *metropolitan*, belonging to the capital city. Here a word not in itself more than prosaic is used with wonderful effect.

l. 147. *rebel three*, Jupiter, Neptune, Pluto.

ll. 171-4. Presage of death from the howling of dogs, or the screech of the owl, or from supernatural visitation, i.e. by the apparition of a person at the moment of his death to another at a distance. Lights burning blue or dim betokened some supernatural visitant. The growth on the wick of candle or lamp called 'stranger' or 'shroud' foretold either a strange visitor, or death.

l. 249. *infant*, because he had just become master of the thunderbolt.

PAGE 134. Book II. l. 14. *nest*, hardly the word to describe the abode of the monstrous gods of the early world. Cf. l. 90.

ll. 34-5. A reminiscence of his visit to the Druid stones near Keswick in June 1818. The effect of the comparison is almost to deprive the gods of life.

l. 45. *plashy*, as if splashed with colour.

l. 66. *Shadow'd*, casting a shadow.

l. 120. *utterless*, too great for utterance.

l. 167. Oceanus alone did not join in opposing Jupiter. The Academia at Athens where Plato taught was surrounded with trees.

ll. 228-9. This is Keats's main position. Cf. *The Grecian Urn*, 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty'.

l. 232. *young God of the Seas*, Neptune.

ll. 374-6. *Memnon*, king of Aethopia, son of Tithonus and Aurora. The colossal statue near Thebes in Egypt which bears his name uttered a mournful sound at sun-rising, like the breaking of the string of a harp.

PAGE 145. Book III. ll. 10-12. *Delphic*. Delphi was the seat of the oracle of Apollo, the god of music.

l. 12. *Dorian*. There were various modes in Greek music, each characterized by a different quality. The Lydian mode was supposed to be effeminate, and the Doric, virile. The Doric was, speaking roughly, the same as the modern minor with a minor seventh. See Grove's *Dictionary*, 'Greek Music', and Smith's *Dictionary of Antiquities* under 'Music'.

ll. 31-2. *mother*, Latona; *twin-sister*, Diana.

l. 75. *bow*, with which he slew the Python.

l. 136. Woodhouse added here in pencil, 'Glory dawn'd, he was a god'.

PAGE 150. FRAGMENT OF AN ODE TO MAIA

Written at Teignmouth on May Day 1818, and included in his letter to Reynolds of May 3, 1818.

l. 5. *Sicilian*, in pastoral style, following Theocritus.

l. 7 sqq. The quiet, the beauty, and the thought packed into these lines is beyond praise. The old poets left their verse to a few, but their poetry was original not copied. Like them, heard only by the flowers, the sky, and the few fit listeners, Keats would that his song might fade, and as the ancient poets, so would he too be content—not longing for immortality.

MEG MERRILIES

Keats gives this poem in a letter to his sister from Dumfries-shire, July 2, 1818. He says, 'We are in the midst of Meg Merrilies's country of whom I suppose you have heard.' Keats is said not to have read *Guy Mannerling*.

l. 25. *Margaret*, of Anjou, queen of Henry VI.

PAGE 152. IN A DREAR-NIGHTED DECEMBER

This was composed in October or December 1818, and was modelled on Dryden's 'Farewell ungrateful Traitor', a song in *The Spanish Friar*. Line 21 originally read 'The feel of not to feel it'. In Colvin, *Life of John Keats*, 1917, there is an alternate version of stanza III.

PAGE 153. THE EVE OF ST. MARK

The poem is contained in a letter to George and Georgiana Keats, September 20, 1819; see p. 181. St. Mark's Eve is April 24. The superstition is that all who are about to die during the coming year can be seen going into the church porch at midnight on this day. Between l. 98 and l. 99 the following sixteen lines (reproduced by Forman, Oxford, 1906) occur in a holograph of the poem :

Gif ye wol stonden hardie wight—
 Amiddes of the blacke night—
 Righte in the churche porch, pardie
 Ye wol behold a companie
 Approchen thee full dolourouse
 For sooth to sain from everich house
 Be it in City or village
 Wol come the Phantom and image
 Of ilka gent and ilka carle
 Whom coldè Deathè hath in parle
 And wol some day that very year
 Touchen with foulè venime spear
 And sadly do them all to die—
 Hem all shalt thou see verilie—
 And everichon shall by thee pass
 All who must die that year Alas.

ll. 33-8. *Moses'*, should be Aaron's. See Exodus, xxviii. 4. *candlesticks*, Rev. i. 12.—The *winged Lion* (Ezek. i. 1-15; Rev. iv. 7) has symbolized St. Mark because he sets forth the kingly character of the Messiah.

mice, 1 Samuel vi. 5.

l. 80. *birds of Paradise* were believed always to fly from their birth to death; the idea that they were 'legless' arose from the way in which their skins were packed for export.

l. 81. *Avadavat*, an East Indian name for a bird sometimes called the *strawberry-finch*. It has a coral-red beak, and red and black plumage spotted with white.

l. 99 sqq. *als*, also; *swevenis*, dreams; *mote*, may.

l. 112. *Cicilie*, St. Cecilia, the patron saint of music.

PAGE 156. ODE ON INDOLENCE

On June 9, 1819 Keats wrote to Miss Jeffrey, 'I hope I am

a little more of a philosopher than I was, consequently a little less of a versifying pet-lamb. You will judge of my 1819 temper when I tell you that the thing I have most enjoyed this year has been writing an *Ode to Indolence*.' See also p. 180, ll. 9-14. The poem suits with the languorous mood which had come upon Keats.

1. 10. *Phidian*. Phidias, Athenian sculptor, who died 432 B.C. Keats knew his work first-hand from the Elgin Marbles in the British Museum; his knowledge of Greek vases, as his words imply, seems to have been less intimate.

1. 47. *casement*, a window opening outward in this instance.

1. 50. i.e. before love and poetry had brought sorrow.

ll. 53-4. See above in the letter of June 9. The lines are unworthy of the rest of the ode.

PAGE 158. LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI

There are two versions of this poem—the earlier (which is printed here) in Keats's letter to George and Georgiana Keats, April 28, 1819, the later in Leigh Hunt's *Indicator* for May 1820. In the later version stanzas i and ii have 'wretched wight', instead of 'knight at arms', stanzas v and vi are transposed, and stanza viii reads :

She took me to her elfin grot,
And there she gaz'd and sighed deep,
And there I shut her wild sad eyes—
So kiss'd to sleep.

As the *Eve of St. Agnes* represents the glowing spirit of romance, so this is a perfect example of restraint both in language and sentiment. But it stirs the spirit to respond in a way in which the longer and more cloying poem does not. Between the two there is a difference similar to that between the perfumes of musk and lavender. The poem is an example of the highest tragic imagination.

PAGE 160. ON A PICTURE OF LEANDER

See p. 31, l. 26 sqq. Leander was a youth of Abydos, the lover of Hero the priestess of Aphrodite at Sestos who lost his life in swimming the Hellespont to visit her.

PAGE 161. ON THE SEA

Written on or before April 17, 1817, as it occurs in the letter to J. H. Reynolds of that date. He says 'From want of regular rest I have been rather *narvus*—and the passage in *Lear*, "Do you not hear the sea?"—has haunted me intensely.'

1. 4. *Hecate*, the goddess of the moon and the guardian of childbirth. She was also goddess of the underworld, of ghosts, and patroness of necromancy and magic.

WHEN I HAVE FEARS

Sent in a letter to Reynolds, January 31, 1818. Keats here uses the Shakespearian sonnet form for the first time. Apart from Shakespeare's, with very few exceptions no sonnet of the Elizabethan times can compare with this for imaginative power.

PAGE 162.

THE HUMAN SEASONS

Sent in a letter to Bailey dated March 13, 1818.

To HOMER

This sonnet was written in 1818.

1. 11. Perhaps Keats's most imaginative line.

1. 14. Diana, as queen of Heaven was the moon; as queen of Hell, Hecate.

PAGE 163.

To FANNY

This sonnet was written probably towards the end of 1819. It fits in well with that date. Its tone of desperation shows that Keats at any rate knew the pains of love.

'BRIGHT STAR, WOULD I WERE STEDFAST AS THOU ART'

This sonnet in its final form (here printed) was written by Keats for his friend Severn, in a folio volume of Shakespeare's plays, on September 28, 1820; they were then off the Dorsetshire coast, on their way to Italy. The sonnet appears to have been originally composed in February 1819. For an account of the earlier form and its variant readings, see Colvin's *Life of Keats*, 1917, pp. 493-4. The original form had these differences: 1. 2, 'amid' for 'aloft'; 1. 3, 'Not' for 'And'; 1. 4, 'devout' for 'patient'; 1. 5, 'morning' for 'moving'; 1. 7, a hyphen left out between 'soft' and 'fallen'; 1. 10, 'cheek-pillow'd' for 'Pillow'd'; no 'fair' before 'love's', but 'white' afterwards; 1. 11, 'To touch' for 'To feel'; 'warm sink' for 'soft fall'; 1. 13, 'To hear, to feel' for 'Still, still to hear'; 1. 14, 'Half passionless, and so swoon on', for 'And so live ever—or else swoon'.

PAGE 164.

LETTERS

The few letters and extracts which follow can do no more than illustrate partially the various aspects of Keats's character. For the understanding of the man the letters are more important almost than the poetry, for in them he speaks out as he expresses his hopes, his fears, his aspirations. In them we recognize him as the devoted brother, the affectionate friend, the morbid and exigeant lover. He unburdens his mind of his thoughts on poetry and art; from them we know

his personal likes (pp. 179-80), his ambition (p. 178), and his humour (pp. 180-1) and what he thought of his friends and of earlier and contemporary poets (pp. 167, 172, 180, 183).

Benjamin Bailey, an Oxford undergraduate, with whom Keats stayed at Oxford in the Long Vacation 1817. He died 1852 or 1853.

l. 18. *Cripps*, a 'young man' of whom nothing seems to be known. The reason for Haydon's coldness is not forthcoming.

PAGE 165, l. 1. *the little Song*, not known.

ll. 10-11. *Sensation*, intuitions. See ll. 6-7.

PAGE 166, l. 3. *years, &c.*: Wordsworth's *Ode on the Intimation of Immortality*, st. x.

l. 13. *Jane, Marianne*, sisters of John Hamilton Reynolds (1796-1852) a friend to whom Keats wrote many letters and a poetical Epistle. They had met in 1816. Reynolds brought out several volumes of poetry, the earliest in 1814. He was a solicitor by profession.

PAGE 167, l. 12. *When lofty trees*: Shakespeare, *Sonnets* xii, ll. 5-8.

l. 22. *As the snail*: *Venus and Adonis*, ll. 1033-8.

l. 30. *a poet's rage*, Shakespeare, *Sonnets* xvii, ll. 11, 12.

l. 32. *my poem, Endymion*.

PAGE 168, l. 1. *my 1st Book*, i.e. of *Endymion*.

ll. 7-8. *Francesca*, in Leigh Hunt's poem *Rimini*.

l. 18. *Wells*, Charles (1800-79), author of *Joseph and his Brethren*. To him Keats wrote a sonnet 'As late I rambled'.

Bewick, William (1795-1866), painter, a pupil of Haydon's.

l. 19. *Landseers*, the family of John Landseer (1769-1852), painter and engraver.

Bob Harris, manager of Covent Garden Theatre.

l. 22. *Haydon*, Benjamin Robert (1786-1846), historical painter. Keats addressed two sonnets to him. See note on *Lamia*, ii. 229-33.

Haslam, William, a warm friend of Keats who became a solicitor.

l. 23. *Brown*, Charles Armitage (1786-1842), the companion of Keats's tour in Scotland, and a literary man of some note.

Dilke, Charles Wentworth (1789-1864), afterwards editor of the *Athenaeum*.

l. 24. *Champion Theatricals*, i.e. the theatrical news for the paper called *The Champion*.

Fanny, Keats's sister.

l. 25. *Mr. Abbey*. 'Tea-merchant of Pancras Lane and Walthamstow: guardian to the Keats brothers and their sister' (Colvin).

l. 27. *Rice*, James, a friend of Keats, of whom little is known save what can be gathered from the letters.

PAGE 169, l. 1. *the thing*, the first preface to *Endymion*.

1. 29. *like lime-twigs*: Shakespeare, *2 Henry VI*, iii. iii. 16.
 PAGE 171, l. 11. *Parson Hugh*, Shakespeare, *Merry Wives*, i. ii.

1. 22. *pip-civilian*, the first part of the word refers to what has been said above, pip being short for pippin, the second part means one expert in law, 'an epitome in law'.

1. 25. *Burden of the Mystery*. Wordsworth, *Tintern Abbey*, l. 38.

PAGE 173. Compare what Keats says in this page with what Wordsworth says in *Tintern Abbey*; Wordsworth uses language to describe abstract thought, Keats throws his thoughts into concrete images.

PAGE 174, l. 7. *Hessey*, James Augustus, one of the partners in the firm Taylor and Hessey, Keats's publishers. See p. 53.

1. 22. *J. S.* Possibly John Scott, editor of the *London Magazine* (Colvin).

PAGE 175, l. 18. *Alfred*, a west country newspaper published at Exeter.

PAGE 176, l. 22. *Tragedy, &c.* See Milton, *Il Penseroso*, l. 97.

1. 26. *I wander, &c.* See Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, III. ii. 9.

PAGE 177, l. 6. *Richard Woodhouse* (1788-1834), a barrister; to him is owed much of our knowledge of the text of Keats's poems.

1. 9. *genus irritabile vatum*, excitable race of poets, Horace, *Epistles*, II. ii. 102.

PAGE 179, l. 4. *Radcliffe*, Ann (1764-1823), a novelist of the pre-Scott romantic school, author of *Mysteries of Udolpho*.

PAGE 180, l. 28. *smoking*, observing.

PAGE 181, l. 23. *Lady Bellaston*, a character in Fielding's *Tom Jones*.

PAGE 182, l. 18. *Aretino*, Pietro (1492-1556), an Italian writer who by his satires gained the appellation of 'The Scourge of Princes'.

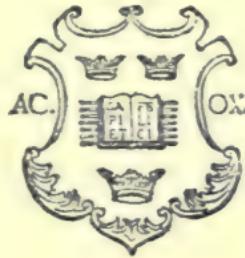
1. 19. *Sannazaro*, Jacopo (1458-1530), Italian pastoralist author of the *Arcadia*.

Machiavelli, Niccolo (1469-1527), Italian statesman, best known as the author of *Il Principe*.

PAGE 183. This is Keats's only known letter to Shelley. It was written in reply to Shelley's letter of July 27, 1820: see the extract given on p. 1.

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